



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**HOW TO DETER AND COERCE IRAN INTO GIVING UP  
ITS NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM**

by

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December 2011

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**HOW TO DETER AND COERCE IRAN INTO GIVING UP ITS NUCLEAR  
WEAPONS PROGRAM**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The feud between the U.S. and Iran has smoldered for over thirty years. Recently, Iran has witnessed popular support for reformists decline while government support for hardliners has increased. President Ahmadinejad has increased his rhetoric against Israel and the U.S. even as the U.S. changed administrations. Through it all, Iran has apparently continued to pursue the acquisition of nuclear weapons, despite six United Nations Security Council Resolutions and billions of Iran's dollars frozen. Each progressive round of attempted negotiations results in little more than additional sanctions. It is time to question the U.S. approach and reevaluate the U.S. strategy of deterring Iran from pursuing nuclear weapons. This research develops a deterrence strategy for use against Iran based on the results of an inductive case study of Iran and the history of its nuclear energy and nuclear weapons program. By examining Iran and the history of its nuclear program and nuclear weapons program, the correct deterrence lens Iran should be viewed through will be deduced, and those entities that are most important for the nuclear weapons program will be identified. A deterrence strategy focused on those entities is then developed.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AEOI	Atomic Energy Organization of Iran
CBI	Central Bank of Iran
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GPS	Global Positioning System
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles
IRGC	Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps
LEU	Low Enriched Uranium
MEK	Mujahaden-e Khalq
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SNSC	Supreme National Security Council
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UN	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The feud between the U.S. and Iran has smoldered for over thirty years. In the last ten years, Iran has witnessed popular support for reformists decline while government support for hardliners has increased. President Ahmadinejad has increased his rhetoric against Israel and the U.S. even as the U.S. changed administrations. Through it all, Iran appears to have continued to pursue nuclear weapons, despite six United Nations Security Council Resolutions and billions of Iran's dollars frozen. Each progressive round of attempted negotiations seemingly results in little more than additional sanctions, with the net outcome being that Iran seems bent on pursuing nuclear weapons. It is time to question the U.S. approach and reevaluate the U.S. strategy of deterring Iran from pursuing nuclear weapons. This research will develop a deterrence strategy for use against Iran, but will do so based off the results of an inductive case study of Iran and the history of its nuclear energy and nuclear weapons program. Deterrence theorists are quick to identify which theory they think works best for Iran, but often fall short on solid recommendations based on key Iranian entities involved. By examining Iran and the history of its nuclear program and nuclear weapons program, the correct deterrence lens Iran should be viewed through will be deduced, and those entities that are most important for the nuclear weapons program will be identified. A deterrence strategy based off those results will then be developed and focused on those entities. This research will expand the existing body of deterrence literature and provide a deterrence strategy designed for use by policy-makers.

Before any discussion of deterring Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons can begin, one must first have a solid understanding of the wide variety of deterrence theories. The first main theory is that of Classical Realism and the Rational Actor model.<sup>1</sup> This theory explains a state's actions in terms of the state being a rational actor, where rationality is defined as weighing the costs and benefits of actions against the goal and then choosing

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

the logical choice.<sup>2</sup> This is the main theory behind James Lindsay's and Ray Takeyh's article in *Foreign Affairs* entitled, "After Iran Gets the Bomb: Containment and Complications," as well as the two critiques of that article from Barry Posen and Barry Rubin.<sup>3</sup> James Russell's article, "A Tipping Point Realized? Nuclear Proliferation in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East," makes a similar case albeit under neo-realism.<sup>4</sup> While the "Rational Actor" model is never explicitly stated in these publications, it is clear from the authors' use of treating Iran or Tehran as a singular entity that is representative of the whole, that this is the model they are using to guide the strategy they are recommending. Furthermore, the authors do not state what should be done to deter or coerce Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon; rather they simply lay out a policy of containment that should be undertaken once Iran already has obtained a nuclear weapon. Admittedly, Posen does not think Iran is a rational actor, yet he continues to describe its behavior and reactions in such terms.

According to this theory, Iran is a rational actor whose behavior should be easily predicated when Iran is presented with a set of choices that have both positive and negative outcomes. As long as the benefits of the positive choices outweigh the costs of the negative choices, then Iran should choose the positive choice. This theory predicts that Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons is the result of Iran's perception that it will benefit more in the long run from having nuclear weapons than it will suffer in the short run from attempting to acquire them. The benefits that Iran likely sees from obtaining nuclear weapons are increased security, increased power, and increased regional and global prestige. In Iran's mind, all of these benefits will more than compensate in the long run

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<sup>2</sup> Karen Mingst, *Essentials of International Relations Third ed.*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> James M. Lindsay and Ray Takeyh, "After Iran Gets the Bomb: Containment and Complications," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (March 2010).

Barry Posen, "The Containment Conundrum: How Dangerous is a Nuclear Iran?," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 4 (July 2010).

Barry Rubin, "The Right Kind of Containment," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 4 (July 2010).

<sup>4</sup> James Russell, "A Tipping Point Realized? Nuclear Proliferation in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 29:3, 521-537, <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all?content=10.1080/13523260802514860>, accessed March 3, 2011.



for what Iran likely sees as the costs of pursuing nuclear weapons: short-term economic sanctions and global stigmatization.

The next theory, the Organizational Behavior Model, looks at the state as a collection of groups, and any actions taken by the government are the result of the standard operating procedures of the main groups that comprise the government.<sup>5</sup> This means that the action a state takes will be very close to the actions that would be taken normally by a group within that government, if that group were in power. The current sanctions targeted against the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) indicate a strong belief in the policy-makers' minds that this deterrence lens has considerable merit.

This model would predict the Iranian pursuit of nuclear weapons to be the result of the standard operating procedures of the main groups or organizations that comprise the government. The main groups that comprise the government are the Office of the Supreme Leader, the President and his Vice Presidents and Cabinet, the AEOI, the IRGC, the Supreme National Security Council, and the Majles. The Supreme Leader controls the IRGC, and the President controls the AEOI. Since the IRGC is tasked with defending the revolution and is in control of the installations where the nuclear program is housed, then this theory predicts that Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons is the result of both the IRGC's interests and its standard operating procedures to develop the best weapons possible in order to defend the revolution. Additionally, the AEOI is tasked with developing the nuclear program in general and thus critical aspects of the nuclear weapons program—such as advanced uranium enrichment—are standard outcomes of development of a civilian nuclear energy program.

While the above two theories focus on the larger aspects of national actions, the next major theory looks at the individuals within those organizations and groups. The Governmental Politics theory views government actions as the political result of the bargaining that occurs amongst the key players.<sup>6</sup> The key players look out after their

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<sup>5</sup> Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision* (New York: Longman, 1999), 391.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

own or their group's best interests, and thus the nation's actions are best understood by knowing the agendas and interests of the key players within the government.<sup>7</sup> The current sanctions are also the product of policy-makers believing this theory holds merit. The sanctions that target key individuals within the IRGC, the AEOI, the nuclear program, and the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) program are illustrative of this theory.

This theory predicts that Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons is the result of the political bargaining that occurs amongst the key players. The key players for this issue are the Supreme Leader, the President, the Speaker of the Majles, the Commander of the IRGC, and the head of the AEOI. This theory would therefore predict that Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons is the result of political bargaining between those individuals and that each individual and/or group would receive some positive benefit from pursuing nuclear weapons. Developing nuclear weapons would benefit Khamenei by establishing him as the ultimate protector of Shia Islam. It would benefit Ahmadinejad by increasing his political power and support. It would benefit the leaders of the IRGC because they would be rewarded by Khamenei, and it would benefit the leaders of the AEOI because they would be rewarded by Ahmadinejad. It would additionally benefit the members of the Supreme National Security Council by increasing their power and prestige, while members of the Majles that supported the program would benefit from increased power as a result of increased popular support.

While the three main theories comprise the main levels of interaction when dealing with a government—individuals, groups, and the nation as whole, there are also theories that do not include rationality in their descriptions. These next several theories all apply to the individual level. They include Psychological and Cognitive deterrence theories, as well as Prospect Theory. Overall, these theories seek to base deterrence strategies off of a more thorough understanding of the key individuals involved. They seek to classify the leadership style of the decision makers—whether they are, “foxes or

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

hedgehogs” in their ability to either manage issues, or dig deep into them.<sup>8</sup> Whether or not the decision makers hold to unusual beliefs, such as mysticism, or whether they are on drugs that may affect their mental state are also critical information requirements needed before a deterrence strategy is made.<sup>9</sup> In addition, it is also critical to understand to what degree those key leaders and decision makers need cognitive consistency in their processing of information, and also to what degree they are emotion-based decision makers whereby they make decisions to meet their emotional needs.<sup>10</sup>

Another theory to examine is that of Neo-Liberal Institutionalism. Karen Mingst describes Neo-Liberal Institutionalism as the theory that asks why states cooperate.<sup>11</sup> Institutionalists argue that ultimately the reason states cooperate is because each is better off cooperating with the other given that the states in question will continue to interact with each other indefinitely.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Institutionalists favor a mixed-actor model that includes NGOs, international organizations and other non-state players.<sup>13</sup> John Tirman, in his paper, “A New Approach to Iran,” argues that it is time for the U.S. to take a “giant leap forward” in its relations with Iran.<sup>14</sup> He argues that both countries have mutual interests in the stability of Afghanistan, Iraq and the Middle East as a whole, and both have mutual interests in the economic and energy sector as well. In his article, “Sanctions against Iran: A Promising Struggle,” Michael Jacobson emphasizes the need for the U.S. to leverage the institutions of the UN and the UN Security Council, the European Union as well as the Financial Action Task Force and alliances in order

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<sup>8</sup> Janice Gross Stein, “Rational Deterrence Against Irrational Adversaries?” in *Complex Deterrence*, ed. T.V. Paul, Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 64.

<sup>9</sup> Keith Payne, “The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction,” *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 22, 2003, pp. 411-428.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, “Rational Deterrence Theory: I Think, Therefore I Deter,” *World Politics* 41, no. 2 (1989, Jan), 208-224. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2010408> Accessed: 22/06/2009 19:54

<sup>11</sup> Mingst, *Essentials of International Relations*, 63.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>13</sup> Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, *The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 362.

<sup>14</sup> John Tirman, “A New Approach to Iran,” *MIT Center for International Studies*, (April 2009), 3-5, [http://web.mit.edu/cis/Publications/IRAN-Tirman\\_2009.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/cis/Publications/IRAN-Tirman_2009.pdf), accessed February 26, 2011.

convince Iran to abandon its nuclear weapons program.<sup>15</sup> While neither author poses a viewpoint that encompasses all aspects of Neo-Liberal Institutionalism, both have enough aspects that they do fit under that label. Since neither the U.S. nor Iran is fully cooperating with each other right now, this theory predicts that the reason is because at least one side views itself as being better off if it does not cooperate. Iran may fit this description since its current leaders enjoy widespread popular support for the nuclear program, and thus the nuclear program is serving to garner popular domestic support.<sup>16</sup>

While theories are important, the current strategy being employed against Iran is equally important as well. The current U.S. strategy to deter Iran from producing nuclear weapons is to place sanctions on Iran's energy sector—to include foreign companies seeking to invest in Iran's energy sector—and the IRGC and the AEOI.<sup>17</sup> These efforts date back to 1996 when the U.S. passed the Iran Sanctions Act which authorized the penalization of any foreign company that tried to invest in Iran's energy sector.<sup>18</sup> The sanctions have steadily increased over the course of three different administrations, culminating in the most recent—and harshest—set of sanctions, United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1929.<sup>19</sup> These sanctions targeted Iran's energy sector to include the Atomic Energy Organizations of Iran, nuclear program and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program (to include ballistic missiles), Iran's banking sector with regards to support for the IRGC, and over 80 Iranian persons, companies, and organizations that are affiliated with the nuclear program, the missile program, the WMD program, the IRGC, the Quds Force, and terrorist organizations to include Hezbollah,

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15 Michael Jacobson, "Sanctions against Iran: A Promising Struggle," *The Washington Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (2008), 69-88. <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/wq/summary/v031/31.3.jacobson.html>, accessed March 10, 2011.

16 International Peace Institute with Charney Research "Iran: Public Opinion on Foreign, Nuclear, and Domestic Issues," December 8, 2010, [http://csis.org/files/publication/101227\\_PRS-Iran\\_Poll\\_IPI\\_Policy\\_Forum.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/101227_PRS-Iran_Poll_IPI_Policy_Forum.pdf), accessed September 29, 2011.

17 U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Iran Sanctions*, by Kenneth Katzman, CRS Report RS20871 (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional Information and Publishing, August 3, 2010), 2.

18 Ibid.

19 U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Iran Sanctions*, by Kenneth Katzman, CRS Report RS20871 (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional Information and Publishing, August 3, 2010), 2

Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.<sup>20</sup> What is most interesting about this is that the IRGC is the organization responsible for running the nuclear installations, the missile program, the WMD program, and the Quds Force.

This strategy shows that the U.S. policy, as evidenced by the leading American role in getting UNSCR 1929 passed, is largely based on the hypothesis that the best way to view Iran is with the Organizational Behavior Model. The U.S. strategy is effectively targeting the IRGC because it views the AEOI and the IRGC as key organizations for the U.S. to place its deterrence pry bar on in order to force Iran away from its pursuit of nuclear weapons. As of yet however, this strategy has failed to work. A new strategy is needed, one founded upon a more accurate understanding of Iran. Therefore, this paper will use an inductive approach based on the history of Iran's nuclear program to first gain a better understanding of Iran, in order to answer the question of "how can the U.S. deter Iran from its pursuit of nuclear weapons?" The hypothesis of this paper is that Iran is actually best viewed through a Classical Realism lens and is seeking to increase its power and security through the development of nuclear weapons.

## **A. METHODOLOGY**

This hypothesis will be tested by conducting an inductive case study of Iran and the history of its nuclear program. It will examine U.S. interest in Iran, and then provide a more in-depth look at the history of Iran's nuclear program in order to identify those key individuals, groups, and institutions most important to the Iranian nuclear weapons program. From there it will identify which deterrence lens the U.S. should view Iran through. Once that lens is established and background is provided, a new deterrence strategy will be delineated that is founded on the lens identified by the inductive case study, and that is focused on the U.S. interests, and the key individuals, groups, and institutions induced from the case study.

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<sup>20</sup> Katzman, "Iran Sanctions," 42.

## **B. AMERICAN INTERESTS**

The United States' interests in Iran are wide and varied. They range from the economic interests to security interests and even diplomatic interests. Part of understanding the U.S. interests in Iran is comprehending the impact of Iranian development of nuclear weapons on the U.S. economy, the international economy and the Middle East regionally.

### **1. U.S. Economic Interests**

If the U.S. wants to stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, there are several economic aspects it should analyze before attempting to do so. The first is Iran's geo-strategic location. Since it could feasibly control the Straits of Hormuz and thus shut off 40% of the world's oil supply, it has significant leverage over the global community. With a global recession currently underway, the tremendous increase in the price per barrel of oil that would result just from an Iranian statement that it would shut down the Straits of Hormuz would further deepen the recession. If the Iranians were to actually attempt to control the Straits, the result would be even worse. Either case would likely precipitate military action by the U.S. Navy to secure the Straits and enable safe passage for merchant shipping. So any deterrence strategy the United States decides to take should keep the Iranian ability to close the Straits in mind.

Another economic aspect to the Iranian nuclear weapons problems is that of the current financial benefit that United States is reaping from the perception in the Middle East that Iran will obtain nuclear weapons. The Gulf States are rapidly upgrading their current military equipment and purchasing new weapons systems in preparation for a more aggressive, nuclear-armed Iran. In 2010, the United States signed arms deals with the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia worth \$122.88 billion.<sup>21</sup> These deals resulted in the UAE purchasing Thaad—a high altitude missile defense system, as well as upgrading

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<sup>21</sup> Roula Khalaf and James Drummond, "Gulf States in \$123bn US arms spree," *Financial Times*, September 20, 2010, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/ffd73210-c4ef-11df-9134-00144feab49a.html#axzz1TtRqR5vP>, accessed August 2, 2011.

their current Patriot missile defense systems.<sup>22</sup> Kuwait likewise upgraded their Patriot missile systems, as well as their air force, while Oman both upgraded 12 of its current F-16s and purchased an additional 18.<sup>23</sup> Saudi Arabia purchased over \$60 billion in new equipment including 85 new F-15s, upgraded another 70 current fighters, and began modernizing its eastern fleet.<sup>24</sup> Included in these contracts are also all the maintenance contracts, thus further tying the United States and the Gulf States together. So while Iran continues its bluster, it is only serving to strengthen the Gulf States militarily, strengthen the ties between the Gulf States and the United States, and enrich the United States. However the U.S. has shown in the past that it is willing to forego business ventures in order to maintain stability, so the short-term economic benefits should not outweigh the long-term costs of Iran developing nuclear weapons. Those costs include the destabilizing and undermining the security of the region.

## **2. Security and Stability Interests**

If Iran is able to successfully develop a nuclear weapon, both the security and stability of the region will be significantly affected. Saudi Arabia has already strongly hinted that should Iran develop nuclear weapons, then Saudi might do so as well.<sup>25</sup> Turkey has also been cited as a country that has restarted its nuclear program as a result of Iran's perceived quest for nuclear weapons.<sup>26</sup> Egypt too has hinted that it would develop a nuclear weapons program if Iran was able to develop a nuclear weapon, though this was before the fall of Mubarak.<sup>27</sup> Though a nuclear-arms race may eventually result

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<sup>22</sup> Khalaf and Drummond, *Financial Times*.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid..

<sup>25</sup> Jay Solomon, "Saudi Suggests Squeezing Iran Over Nuclear Ambitions," *Wall Street Journal*, June 22, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304887904576400083811644642.html>, accessed September 15, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Karl Vick, "Energy, Iran Spur Turkey's Revival of Nuclear Program," *Washington Post*, March 7, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/06/AR2006030601513.html>, accessed September 15, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Will Fulton, Ariel Farrar-Wellman, Robert Frasco, "Egypt-Iran Foreign Relations," *IranTracker.Org*, August 22, 2011, <http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/egypt-iran-foreign-relations>, accessed September 15, 2011.

in a new level of regional stability due to the most powerful countries in the region having nuclear weapons, it would also mean that the most advanced and dangerous weapons ever invented would reside in the countries that are not the most stable. In the last 90 years, Egypt has had three wars, one military intervention, two coups, and one assassination of the president.<sup>28</sup> During the same time period, Turkey experienced two major wars, invaded Cypress, and had four coups, while Saudi Arabia has experienced the overthrow of one king, the assassination of the next and significant social unrest both in the 1979–1980 period as well as in 2011.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, all three countries continue to have terrorist activities directed against them and have terrorists living inside their borders. These are not historically stable countries and should those countries develop nuclear weapons, it is possible that they may fall into the wrong hands during a period of instability.

Even if those weapons do not fall into the hands of terrorists during a period of instability, Iran may still provide a terrorist group it sponsors with a nuclear weapon. Iran is known to support Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Hamas, as well as numerous insurgent groups, terrorists, and militias in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>30</sup> Iranian support specifically to Hezbollah is likely the largest amount of state support a terrorist group has received. One U.S. Department of Defense report stated that Iran provides an estimated \$100 million to \$200 million of support annually to Hezbollah, and this amount does not include how much more is provided to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad or Hamas.<sup>31</sup> Another report stated that Hezbollah has over 40,000 rockets stockpiled near the Israeli

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<sup>28</sup> “Timeline: Egypt,” *BBC News*, August 3, 2011, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/790978.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/790978.stm), accessed September 16, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 136–137.

<sup>30</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> *Unclassified Report on Military Power of Iran*, April 2010, <http://www.foxnews.com/projects/pdf/IranReportUnclassified.pdf>, accessed September 16, 2011.



border, courtesy of Iran.<sup>32</sup> In addition, Iran is known to have conducted at least one assassination in Berlin, and is believed to have been responsible for the Beirut bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in 1983, Jewish and Israeli centers in South America in the 1990s, and the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996.<sup>33</sup> Iran has also supplied substantial amounts of weapons, equipment, and training used against U.S. forces both in Iraq and Afghanistan as well.<sup>34</sup> Given Iran's history of sponsoring terrorism and arming terrorist groups that attack U.S. interests and U.S. allies' interests around the world, it is not a far stretch to consider that Iran may give a nuclear weapon to a terrorist group to attack a U.S. interest or U.S. ally's interests.

It is important to note the Iraq and Afghanistan are both U.S. allies currently. Iran's sponsorship of anti-American forces in both locations highlights Iran's ability to either help or hinder the U.S. accomplish its objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even though the U.S. and Iran have publicly been at odds with each other recently, they worked together covertly from 2001–2003 to coordinate policy of Afghanistan, which was Iran's biggest enemy to its east, and then again overtly in 2007–2008 to talk about Iraq—Iran's former greatest enemy to its west.<sup>35</sup> In addition, both the Taliban and Saddam Hussein were Iran's greatest enemies, and therefore the U.S. actually provided Iran a favor by eliminating both. Regardless, the issues of Iraq and Afghanistan are related to the issue of Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons in that both countries currently provide an avenue that Iran may use to strike back at the U.S. in the event the U.S. undertakes an action deemed undesirable by Iran.

Another problem that might develop if Iran develops nuclear weapons is that of regional sectarian conflict. The Arab leadership throughout the Gulf is concerned about, “the prestige and the boost that it would give to Iranian political penetration of the

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<sup>32</sup> Richard Beeston and Nicholas Blanford, “Hezbollah Stockpiles 40,000 Rockets Near Israeli Border,” *The Times*, August 5, 2009, [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle\\_east/article6739175.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article6739175.ece), accessed September 16, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 18.

region.”<sup>36</sup> This fear has increase substantially since the Arab Spring of 2011 as the masses throughout the region began pressing for self-determination.<sup>37</sup> The Arab leaders’ fears are that given the current sectarian tensions in the region and political climate, if Iran develops a nuclear weapon, the Arab Shia populations will become emboldened to revolt. This fear is further enflamed by the history that exists between Iran and the Gulf States. Iran is suspected of being involved in trying to overthrow the governments of Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, not to mention Lebanon and Israel as well.<sup>38</sup> Given this history, should Iran achieve a nuclear weapon, the Arab leaders will become even more nervous about their Shia populations.

A larger-picture issue that the U.S. is interested in as a result of Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons is the precedent the world is setting by not stopping Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons. As counter-proliferation expert Jon Wolfsthal says, “Iran has systematically violated international laws and obligations not to pursue nuclear weapons and to place key nuclear assets under inspection for two decades.”<sup>39</sup> So if Iran is successful in developing nuclear weapons, Iran will set the precedence that other countries may sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Additional Protocol, not abide by the standards therein, and suffer no serious consequences as a result.

Furthermore, on the more practical side, Iran has demonstrated that it was susceptible to coercion through military force, but this may change if Iran develops nuclear weapons. In 1999, Turkey bombed Iranian territory to punish Iran for sheltering a Kurdish insurgent group that had been attacking Turkish soldiers for years.<sup>40</sup> In response, Iran stopped sheltering them, thus showing it was susceptible to coercion

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<sup>36</sup> Gary Sick, et. al., “Iran’s Strategic Concerns and US Interests,” *Middle East Policy Council* 15 (Spring 2008): 14.

<sup>37</sup> Ozden Zeynep Oktav, “The Gulf States and Iran: a Turkish Perspective,” *Middle East Policy Council* (summer 2011): 2, <http://www.Mepc.Org/Journal/Middle-East-Policy-Archives/Gulf-States-And-Iran-Turkish-Perspective?Print>, accessed September 16, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 2009), p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> Jon B. Wolfsthal, “Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions and American Security,” *American Foreign Policy*, [americanforeignpolicy.org/library/documents/Wolfsthal\\_Nuclear\\_Paper.doc](http://americanforeignpolicy.org/library/documents/Wolfsthal_Nuclear_Paper.doc), accessed September 15, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Katel, “US Policy on Iran,” *CQ Researcher* 17, No. 41, p. 966, <http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/>, accessed August 9, 2011.

through military force.<sup>41</sup> However, if Iran develops a nuclear weapon, the stakes may grow too high to attempt to change Iran's behavior by using military force since Iran may threaten retaliation with a nuclear weapon.

To summarize, the two biggest goals the United States has regarding Iran and its pursuit of nuclear weapons are that Iran does not develop a nuclear weapon, and that Iran stops sponsoring terrorism.<sup>42</sup> These goals are directly tied to the dominate U.S. interest in the region—stability. Stability means stable oil prices, and oil is the fuel for the modern economy. As long as the oil prices are stable, then the costs of doing business—moving cargo, shipping products, etc.—remains low. However, if prices rise, and rise suddenly, then recessions will likely result. In fact, according to economist James Hamilton, ten out of the eleven recessions the U.S. has experienced since WWII were associated with a dramatic rise in the price of oil.<sup>43</sup> As Calvin Coolidge once said, “the chief aim of the American people is business. They are profoundly concerned with producing, buying, selling, investing, and prospering in the world.”<sup>44</sup> As long as the Middle East is stable, then the oil prices will also remain relatively stable. However the Middle East is not stable, and Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons is not helping the situation.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 967.

<sup>42</sup> Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, “Remarks With Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni,” March 3, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/03/119956.htm>, accessed September 14, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Robert McNally and Michael Levi, “A Crude Predicament,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67890/robert-mcnally-and-michael-levi/a-crude-predicament>, accessed September 14, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Calvin Coolidge, <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/c/calvincool395125.html>, accessed September 14, 2011.

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## **II. UNDERSTANDING IRAN'S PURSUIT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

The main problem the West has when dealing with Iran may be that the West does not understand Iran. This problem is compounded by the fact that the United States has no Embassy within Iran. As such, any information the U.S. receives on Iran is tainted with whatever lens is applied by the go-between. While the world media is a source of information on Iran, it often lacks the in-depth insight into the personal motivations or political in-fighting that caused the action to occur. The “why” is crucial to understanding both a person’s actions and a state’s actions because effective deterrence and compellence strategies are frequently targeted against such motivations. As such, this chapter will seek to analyze Iran’s behavior with regard to its pursuit of nuclear weapons in order to determine the best deterrence theory or theories to use against Iran in order to convince Iran to stop pursuing nuclear weapons. Therefore, it is imperative that the history of Iran’s nuclear program is analyzed first in order to determine the individuals and groups most involved. From there, the focus moves to the two main individuals, Khamenei and Ahmadinejad, and explains each man’s role and beliefs about the nuclear weapons program. The focus then shifts to the three main groups identified by the historical analysis as being involved in the nuclear weapons program: the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), and the Supreme National Defense Council. Additionally, the role of the Majles, or Parliament, is also examined in order to determine the extent of their role in the nuclear weapons program. Finally, an explanation of why Unitary, Rational Actor theory, coupled with Organizational Process theory and Governmental Politics theory provide the best explanatory power in understanding Iran’s continual pursuit of nuclear weapons. Before that can begin, an understanding of the nuclear fuel cycle is required to understand the crux of the matter.

## A. NUCLEAR FUEL CELL BACKGROUND

In order to comprehend the importance of this issue, an understanding of the nuclear fuel cycle is helpful. A nuclear reactor requires nuclear fuel. Nuclear fuel is made by processing uranium ore. Naturally occurring uranium ore consists of two isotopes, roughly 0.7% of  $U^{235}$ , and 99.3% of  $U^{238}$ .<sup>45</sup> Civilian nuclear-energy reactors require the  $U^{235}$  to be enriched to roughly 3–5%, while research reactors require uranium enriched up to approximately 20%  $U^{235}$ .<sup>46</sup> To have nuclear weapons requires the uranium to be enriched to approximately 90% or more  $U^{235}$ .<sup>47</sup> The problem lies in the fact that the same process is used to enrich uranium for use in a civilian reactor as is used to make uranium for use in a nuclear weapon.<sup>48</sup> So while it is possible for Iran to simply buy reactor fuel from other countries, having to do so would still place Iran in the strategically vulnerable position of being dependent on other countries for its fuel.

## B. HISTORY OF IRAN'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM

The origin of Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons dates back to 1957 when the U.S. and Iran signed an agreement regarding civilian nuclear cooperation as part of the U.S. State Department's Atoms for Peace program.<sup>49</sup> In 1973, the Shah's interest began increasing rapidly after a study was published by the U.S.-based Stanford Research Institute which highlighted Iran's need for nuclear energy due the life-expectancy of the Iranian oil reserves (a decline in production was expected between 2010–2020).<sup>50</sup> In

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<sup>45</sup> "Q&A: Uranium Enrichment," *BBC News*, (September 1, 2006), [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/5278806.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5278806.stm), accessed March 5, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Farhang Jahanpour, *Chronology of Iran's Nuclear Program, 1957-2007*, [http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/oxford\\_research\\_group\\_chronology\\_irans\\_nuclear\\_programme\\_1957\\_2007](http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/oxford_research_group_chronology_irans_nuclear_programme_1957_2007), accessed February 25, 2011.

<sup>50</sup> Mohammad Javad Zarif, "Tackling the Iran-U.S. Crisis: The Need for a Paradigm Shift," *Journal of International Affairs* 60, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2007): 80, <http://www.zarif.net/Articles/Columbia%20JIA.pdf>, accessed February 18, 2011.

1974, the Shah established the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI).<sup>51</sup> By the mid-1970s, the Shah's interest in his nuclear program had expanded from nuclear energy to obtaining nuclear weapons.<sup>52</sup> At some point during the mid-1970s, the founder and first president of the AEOI, Akbar Etemad, asked the Shah if he wanted the capability to build a bomb.<sup>53</sup> The Shah reportedly replied that it was premature to do so then [mid-1970s], but that if the security situation changed in the next decade or two, then it would become a priority.<sup>54</sup> As a result, Etemad created a special team for nuclear research designed to give Iranian decision-makers the option for Iran to make a bomb, and make it quickly, should the need arise.<sup>55</sup>

But until the time that Iran needed a nuclear weapon, the Shah was mainly interested in nuclear energy. Between 1974 and 1976, the Shah signed agreements for sixteen reactors: two from a French company, eight from the U.S., and six from German companies.<sup>56</sup> In 1978, Iran and the U.S. signed the U.S.—Iran Nuclear Energy Agreement in Tehran, right before the Iranian Revolution began.<sup>57</sup>

While the Iranian Islamic Revolution ended the Shah's nuclear program in 1979, the war with Iraq provided the impetus to restart it. Saddam's use of chemical weapons, combined with the relative stalemate between Iran and Iraq in the mid-1980s, led the then-Chairmen of the Parliament, Hashemi-Rafsanjani to search for help from the Europeans, to no avail.<sup>58</sup> However, in 1987 he found A.Q. Khan, the Pakistani nuclear scientist who is now widely renowned for his illegal nuclear black market network, and

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<sup>51</sup> "Nuclear Iran," *The Institute for Science and International Security—Online*, <http://www.isisnucleariran.org/nuclear-history/#1974>, accessed March 5, 2011.

<sup>52</sup> Said Amir Arjomand, *After Khomeini—Iran Under His Successors*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 197.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Paul Michaud, "Iran opted for N-bomb under Shah: Ex-official," *Dawn*, September 23, 2003, as found in "Nuclear Iran," *The Institute for Science and International Security—Online*, <http://www.isisnucleariran.org/nuclear-history/#1974>, accessed March 5, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 198.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 198.

obtained the plans for the P-1 centrifuge as well as a gas centrifuge.<sup>59</sup> During this same time, Rafsanjani also signed nuclear cooperation agreements with both Pakistan and Argentina in which both countries agreed to train a specific number of Iranian scientists.<sup>60</sup> In 1989, President Rafsanjani signed a nuclear cooperation pact with Russia.<sup>61</sup> The early and mid-1990s saw initial agreements between Russia and Iran, as well as China and Iran, however, by the late 1990s, substantial international pressure forced Russia and China to pull out of the agreements.<sup>62</sup> As Mohammad Javad Zarif, former Iranian-envoy to the United Nations, said, “As a result, Iran was left with no other option but to be discreet in its peaceful activities.”<sup>63</sup>

During this time period, a sub-cartel comprised of the IRGC and physicists at the Sharif Technological University emerged at Iran’s Atomic Energy Institute.<sup>64</sup> This sub-cartel was responsible for the nuclear development project which began in 1999, even though the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was not informed by Iran of a new project.<sup>65</sup> This is important because Iran was a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and that treaty requires all signatories to inform the IAEA when starting a new project.<sup>66</sup> Fortunately an exiled opposition group, the Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) exposed Iran’s, “operation of a centrifuge uranium enrichment plant in Natanz and a heavy water plant in Arak in August 2002.”<sup>67</sup> This revelation created an international crisis and Iran’s Supreme National Security Council became involved.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 198.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid..

<sup>61</sup> Jahanpour, *Chronology*.

<sup>62</sup> Zarif, “Tackling the Iran-U.S. Crisis,” 81.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid..

<sup>64</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 198.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid..



For the next events, it is important to have the historical context. The U.S. invaded Afghanistan, Iran's neighbor, in October 2001, after the Afghanistan-based Al Qaeda terrorist organization attacked the U.S. on September 11, 2001. Several months later, Iran was caught smuggling 50 tons of weapons, ammunition, and explosives to the Palestinian Authority in January 2002.<sup>69</sup> Several weeks after this event, on January 29, 2002, President Bush gave his famous "Axis of Evil" speech in which he accused Iran of being part of the axis of evil in the world whose pursuit of weapons of mass destruction threatened global peace.<sup>70</sup> This resulted in the international community becoming highly sensitive to missteps by states that had effectively been "placed on notice" by the United States—a country with the most powerful military in the world, and who had just itself become highly sensitive towards terrorism or anyone supporting terrorism. So it was against this background that one month after the MEK revealed the secret plants at Natanz and Arak, the U.S. began building a case in the international community against Iraq and Iraq's supposed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs.

Now during this time, President Khatami, a reformist, had replaced President Rafsanjani inside Iran, and both Khatami and the Supreme Leader Khamenei saw the winds of violent change beginning to surround them when the U.S.-sponsored UN ultimatum targeting Iran was passed in September 2003. The ultimatum called for Iran to cooperate by the end of October 2003 and threatened UN Security Council action if Iran did not comply.<sup>71</sup> As such, Khatami and Khamenei placed the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Dr. Hasan Ruhani, in control of the negotiations with the IAEA in October 2003.<sup>72</sup>

The political environment that Ruhani had to operate in was difficult. When Rafsanjani was President, he had a radicalist domestic policy, but a pragmatic foreign

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<sup>69</sup> James Bennett, "Seized Arms Would Have Vastly Extended Arafat's Arsenal," *The New York Times* (January 12, 2002), <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0DE7D61F39F931A25752C0A9649C8B63&sec=&spoon=&pagewanted=all>, accessed February 25, 2011.

<sup>70</sup> "Bush State of the Union Address," *CNN* (January 29, 2002), <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/29/bush.speech.txt/> accessed February 25, 2011.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

policy.<sup>73</sup> When Khatami became President in 1997, he had a reformist domestic policy in which he tried to expand the freedoms of the average Iranian citizen and focus more on democracy and civil society.<sup>74</sup> However, the Guardian Council blocked Khatami's and the reformists' in the Majles (Parliament) attempts to make new laws, on the basis that the reforms violated both the Shari'a and the Constitution.<sup>75</sup> In addition, Khamenei's hardliners twisted the laws and used them politically against Khatami and his reformists.<sup>76</sup> Though Khatami was re-elected by a landslide in 2001, by 2003, he was largely ineffective. As a result of Khatami's attempts in trying to reform the Iranian society, the hardliners—who did not want reforms and who instead wanted to return to more of the revolutionary path—began gaining strength. In 2003, this process had already begun and thus when Ruhani had to negotiate with IAEA and the EU, there were two camps within the Iranian government: those who could sense the international pressure and thought it wise to acquiesce to international demands, and the hardliners who wanted to push nuclear development full speed, ignore international pressure and the IAEA, and force the U.S. and the West to, “make major concessions similar to those it was making for North Korea.”<sup>77</sup>

Ruhani, being more pragmatic than radical, reached an agreement with the EU-3 (France, Germany, and the United Kingdom) on October 21, 2003, in which Iran would, “voluntarily suspend uranium enrichment and sign the nuclear nonproliferation treaty (NPT)'s Additional Protocol on international inspection.”<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, Ruhani concluded negotiations on the Paris agreement of November 15, 2004, with the EU-3 though neither side ever fully signed it.<sup>79</sup> The agreement offered the following: support

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<sup>73</sup> Abbas Kahdim, class lecture at the Naval Post Graduate School, (Monterey, CA, February 24, 2011).

<sup>74</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 94.

<sup>75</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 92.

<sup>76</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 94.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

for Iran entering into the World Trade Organization; a measure aimed at antiterrorism cooperation whereby the MEK would be placed in the same category as Al Qaeda; and uranium enrichment only for peaceful purposes for Iran, all in exchange for the IAEA having unrestricted inspection access to Iran's nuclear program.<sup>80</sup>

However, between the time that Ruhani began negotiations in October 2003, and the time the Paris agreement reached finality in November 2004, the Iranian Parliamentary elections were held. The Guardian Council disqualified over 2500 potential delegates, and by doing so ensured that the conservatives gained control over the Parliament.<sup>81</sup> Thus the conservative-dominated Parliament began sounding rumblings in August 2004 about possibly passing a bill that obligated the government to resume the nuclear program.<sup>82</sup> Once the IAEA passed a resolution calling for suspension of all enrichment-related activities however, on 31 October 2004, the Iranian Parliament passed a bill that obligated the government to resume activity on the nuclear program, to include uranium-enrichment activities.<sup>83</sup> However, no date was set by Parliament for when the government should resume activity and thus many political analysts believed Parliament's actions as largely symbolic.<sup>84</sup> It is important to note however, that this action by Parliament may have served as an additional negotiating tactic by the Iranians to drive the EU-3 into agreement on the Paris treaty—which the EU-3 agreed to on November 15th.

The EU-3 took several months in reviewing the Paris agreement, and when they finally provided a counter-offer to Iran in August of 2005, it was based on the contingent

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<sup>80</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 199.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>82</sup> "Iranian parliament has a right to promote uranium resumption," *Xinhua News*, August 10, 2004, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2004-08/10/content\\_1755903.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2004-08/10/content_1755903.htm), accessed April 29, 2011.

<sup>83</sup> Amir Paivar, "Iran votes to resume nuclear program," *The Independent*, November 1, 2004, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iran-votes-to-resume-nuclear-programme-535582.html>, accessed April 19, 2011.

<sup>84</sup> Nazila Fathi, "Iran Votes To Resume Nuclear Work," *New York Times*, (New York, N.Y.), November 1, 2004, p. A.6.

that Iran would cease enrichment production.<sup>85</sup> Iran did not prefer this, thus did not accept the counter-offer, and instead pulled out of the Additional Protocol. On August 8, 2005, Iran resumed its enrichment of uranium that it had voluntarily halted since 2003.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps as a way of trying to signal to the West that Iran only wanted nuclear energy, Khamenei issued a fatwa that stated that, “production, stockpiling, and use of nuclear weapons” was against the beliefs of Islam.<sup>87</sup> In addition, on November 19th, the Parliament passed another bill that obligated the government to suspend the all the voluntary steps Iran had taken to build confidence amongst the international community in the last three years, if that IAEA referred the Iranian case to the UN Security Council on November 24.<sup>88</sup> However, the IAEA did not refer the Iranian case to the UNSC until February 4, 2006, and so no actions were taken based on the Parliamentary bill, and once again Parliament’s actions were viewed by many as largely symbolic.<sup>89</sup>

President Ahmadinejad was elected by the hardliners in 2005 and his assumption of power in Iran represented a tide-change in the struggle between the pragmatists such as Ruhani, and the hardliners. It was only a small step then, when Ahmadinejad announced in April 2006 that since Iran had enriched a small amount of uranium to the low threshold level of 3.5%, it therefore just became one of the world’s nuclear countries.<sup>90</sup> Understandably, this caused concern in the western world and a flurry of diplomatic activity occurred between April and June 2006, culminating in the five permanent members of the Security Council sending a package of incentives to Iran to convince it to stop its enrichment activities.<sup>91</sup> While Ahmadinejad did not say no, he also did not

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<sup>85</sup> Rosalind Ryan, “Iran Resumes Uranium Enrichment,” from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2005/aug/08/energy.iran>, accessed February 25, 2011.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> “Iran breaks seal at nuclear plant,” CNN, August 10, 2005, [http://articles.cnn.com/2005-08-10/world/iran.iaea.1350\\_1\\_uranium-conversion-natanz-enrichment?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://articles.cnn.com/2005-08-10/world/iran.iaea.1350_1_uranium-conversion-natanz-enrichment?_s=PM:WORLD), accessed April 19, 2011.

<sup>88</sup> “Iran’s Parliament votes to suspend voluntary steps in case of UNSC referral,” Payvand News, November 20, 2005, <http://www.payvand.com/news/05/nov/1192.html>, accessed April 13, 2011.

<sup>89</sup> “IAEA refers Iran to the UN Security Council,” *Outlook India.com*, February 4, 2006, <http://news.outlookindia.com/item.aspx?353078>, accessed April 19, 2011.

<sup>90</sup> Jahanpour, *Chronology*.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

respond within the deadline.<sup>92</sup> This caused the UN Security Council to pass the first of six UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR), UNSCR 1696, which legally bound Iran to stop enriching uranium.<sup>93</sup>

When Ahmadinejad took office, yet another important change occurred. Khamenei removed Ruhani as the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, and replaced him with Ali Larijani.<sup>94</sup> This is important because according to Article 176 of Iran's Constitution, the President is the Council's Chairman.<sup>95</sup> Both Khamenei and Khatami had placed Ruhani as the Secretary, and thus Khatami delegated responsibility to Ruhani. However, when Ahmadinejad was elected, Khamenei did not consult Ahmadinejad about removing Ruhani—who technically had been operating in the President's authority. This reflects Khamenei's shrewd political maneuvering to further coalesce his power by usurping the constitutionally provisioned power of the President.

On August 22, 2006, Iran gave an official reply to the UN Security Council saying essentially that it was interested in talks, but ceasing the enrichment of its uranium could not be a precondition to those talks.<sup>96</sup> The Security Council did not accept Iran's offer, and so on December 23, 2006, UNSCR 1737 was passed, which placed sanctions on Iran by ordering all countries to cease providing technology and materials to Iran that might contribute to its nuclear and missile programs.<sup>97</sup> It also sanctioned ten key Iranian companies involved in the two programs, as well as twelve individuals involved in those companies, freezing the assets of all twenty-two entities.<sup>98</sup> In response, the Iranian

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<sup>92</sup>Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 202.

<sup>93</sup>UN Security Council, *Security Council Demands Iran Suspend Uranium Enrichment by 31 August, Or Face Possible Economic, Diplomatic Sanctions*, July 31, 2006, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8792.doc.htm>, accessed on February 26, 2011.

<sup>94</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 202.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Jahanpour, *Chronology*.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid..

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

Parliament voted on December 27, to call on the government to cut ties with the IAEA and to speed up work on the nuclear program.<sup>99</sup>

In March 2007, the UNSCR decided to tighten and expand the sanctions even further by passing UNSCR 1747. UNSCR 1747 banned the export of Iranian weapons (likely due to the significant number of new Iranian arms, ammunition, and equipment being found in the hands of Iraqi insurgents), and froze the assets of an additional fifteen people and thirteen organizations involved in either the nuclear program or the missile program, or connected to the IRGC.<sup>100</sup>

In April 2007, Ahmadinejad announced that Iran was enriching uranium on an industrial scale, while Ali Larijani, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, said that they had begun injecting gas into 3000 centrifuges—a key step in enrichment.<sup>101</sup> In May 2007, Ahmadinejad had Ruhani's deputy in the nuclear negotiations, Mohammad Hossein Musavian, arrested for treason. However, in reality it was because Musavian made highly critical remarks about Ahmadinejad's nuclear policy and failure to avoid UN sanctions.<sup>102</sup> This was an indicator of the domestic politics and disagreements there were occurring within Iran during this time. In July 2007, Iran and the IAEA announced a two-month agreement during which time the IAEA would have access to Iran's nuclear sites in order to clear up unresolved issues.<sup>103</sup> By late August, the IAEA said that it was able to verify that at the sites it inspected, all nuclear research was for peaceful purposes and that it had found no diversion of nuclear material for any other purpose.<sup>104</sup> On October 27, 2007, Ahmadinejad used his constitutional rights and replaced Ali Larijani, whom the Supreme Leader had appointed, with Sa'id Jalili, one of Ahmadinejad's hand-picked men.<sup>105</sup> Khamenei, knowing that Larijani was a better negotiator, responded by

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<sup>99</sup> "Iran may cut cooperation with IAEA," *MSNBC News*, December 27, 2006, [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16371070/ns/world\\_news-mideast/n\\_africa/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16371070/ns/world_news-mideast/n_africa/), accessed April 19, 2011.

<sup>100</sup> Jahanpour, *Chronology*.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ajormand, *After Khomeini*, 202.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid..

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ajormand, *After Khomeini*, 202.

simply appointing Larijani as one of Khamenei's two representatives on the Supreme National Security Council.<sup>106</sup> In November, the IAEA's report on Iran's compliance and research was officially published. However, Mohammed El Baradei, the IEAE Director General, also added that he still could say definitively that, "some activities may have military aspects."<sup>107</sup> Musavian was also acquitted of most charges during November, however Ahmadinejad personally prevailed upon the prosecutor and Musavian was given a two-year suspended sentence in April 2008.<sup>108</sup>

In March 2008, the UN Security Council passed UNSCR 1803 which expanded once more the number of entities sanctioned for their involvement in Iran's nuclear and missile programs, increased vigilance of Iranian Banks, and highlighted the need for countries to inspect the cargoes of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line and Iran Air Cargo.<sup>109</sup> In June, evidence mounted that Khamenei was reigning in Ahmadinejad when, in a conciliatory manner, Iran's Foreign Minister Mottaki proposed comprehensive talks with the UN, and Ahmadinejad remained quiet for six weeks with none of his usual bluster.<sup>110</sup> The five foreign ministers of the permanent members of the Security Council accepted the proposal with great alacrity, and talks began in July.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, Khamenei had Ali Akbar Velayati—the Foreign Affairs advisor to the Leader—issue a statement that emphasized the constitutional authority of the Supreme Leader to decide, "on matters of strategic importance."<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, the statement also affirmed that on the basis of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and Iran's right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, a compromise could be made with the U.S..<sup>113</sup> The importance of this is that it silenced—albeit temporarily—Ahmadinejad's rhetoric and portrayed Khamenei as

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Jahanpour, *Chronology*.

<sup>108</sup> Ajormand, *After Khomeini*, 203.

<sup>109</sup> UN Security Council, Security Council Tightens Restrictions on Iran's Proliferation-Sensitive Nuclear Activities, Increases Vigilance Over Iranian Banks, Has States Inspect Cargo, March 3, 2008, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sc9268.doc.htm>, accessed on February 27, 2011.

<sup>110</sup> Ajormand, *After Khomeini*, 203.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ajormand, *After Khomeini*, 203.

being more moderate than Ahmadinejad. In September however, the IAEA released a report which told of Iran's progress in centrifuge enrichment, as well as Iran's resistance to address the concerns about its possible nuclear weapons research.<sup>114</sup> This report caused the UN Security Council to pass UNSCR 1835 on September 27, 2008, which reaffirmed the four previous resolutions. Ahmadinejad's response was Iran would resist the "bullying powers," while his head negotiator, Sa'id Jalili said the resolutions were not conducive to building trust.<sup>115</sup>

Having been elected to the Parliament in the 2008 elections, Ali Larijani became Speaker of the Parliament. In April 2009, he announced a much larger role for Parliament in the nuclear negotiations when he said that the Parliament would start supervising the nuclear negotiations.<sup>116</sup> Parliament would only allow talks that fell within the framework that the Parliament established and only if the talks were conducted within the framework of the Parliamentary resolutions.<sup>117</sup> The importance of this is that it shows the power over the nuclear negotiations remaining within Khamenei's hands, since Larijani is one of Khamenei's loyalists.

In addition, the Presidential Elections were held in 2009. After the highly disputed elections, massive protests and riots broke out across Iran. Khamenei issued a fatwa calling for everyone to return home and accept the outcome of the elections, but very few obeyed it.<sup>118</sup> Fortunately, for Khamenei, the IRGC owed its loyalty to both him and Ahmadinejad, and thus crushed the protests. This is important because Khamenei, as the Supreme Leader, had the ability to issue governmental ordinances that are supposed to be obeyed as God's own commands: all Iranian shias should obey his

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<sup>114</sup> David Albright, Jacqueline Shire, and Paul Brannon, "IAEA Report on Iran: Centrifuge Operations Significantly Improving; Gridlock on Alleged Weapons Issues," *Institute for Science and International Security online* (September 15, 2008), [http://www.isis-online.org/publications/iran/ISIS\\_Report\\_Iran\\_15September2008.pdf](http://www.isis-online.org/publications/iran/ISIS_Report_Iran_15September2008.pdf), accessed February 27, 2011.

<sup>115</sup> "UN Approves New Resolution," *BBC News*, (September 28, 2008), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7640133.stm>, accessed February 27, 2011.

<sup>116</sup> "News Analysis: Iran's parliament stresses role in nuclear talks to safeguard 'inalienable right,'" *Xinhua News*, April 13, 2009, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/13/content\\_11174909.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/13/content_11174909.htm), accessed April 13, 2011.

<sup>117</sup> "News Analysis," *Xinhua News*.

<sup>118</sup> Kahdim, class lecture, February 8, 2011.



fatwas, or so the theory goes. The fact that his fatwa was not obeyed by the people and instead had to be enforced with guns showed Khamenei's power base had slipped from religious to merely coercive—a much weaker platform.

Regardless, on September 21, 2009, Iran informed the IAEA that it was in the process of building a second enrichment facility near Qom.<sup>119</sup> This caused great concern among the western countries since the facility was in the process of being constructed and thus Iran should have told the IAEA about it much earlier. In October, the U.S., France and Russia proposed a deal with Iran that tried to find a compromise between Iran's legitimate right to nuclear energy, and the concerns over Iran having a secret nuclear weapons program.<sup>120</sup> Ahmadinejad responded that he was willing to cooperate with the west, but no response was given to him.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore on February 9, 2010, Ahmadinejad announced that Iran had enriched uranium to 20%.<sup>122</sup> At this same time, Ali Akbar Salehi, the current head of the AEOI, announced that they could enrich all the way to 100%, if they wanted, or if they needed to.<sup>123</sup> This is important because it signals that the AEOI had finally achieved the goal that its first president, Akbar Etemad set for it back in 1974: to give the Iranian decision-makers the ability to build a bomb quickly, if needed. In May 2010, Turkey, Brazil and Iran reached an agreement for Iran to ship its low-enriched uranium to Turkey in exchange for enriched fuel for a research reactor.<sup>124</sup> Many thought, however, that this agreement was nothing more than a ploy by Ahmadinejad to stave off a new round of sanctions. The U.S. eventually decided this agreement did not resolve enough issues, and thus pushed for additional sanctions. These

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<sup>119</sup> Thomas Erdbink, "Angry Reaction 'Shocked' Head of Iran's Nuclear Program," *The Washington Post*, (September 26, 2009), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/26/AR2009092601359.html>, accessed February 27, 2011.

<sup>120</sup> "Iran Ready for Nuclear Agreement," *Al-Jazeera* (October 29, 2009), <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2009/10/2009102984633409448.html>, accessed February 27, 2011.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Parisa Hafezi, "Iran says nuclear fuel production goes, 'very well,'" *Reuters* (February 11, 2010), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/02/11/us-iran-nuclear-salehi-idUSTRE61A4AS20100211>, accessed February 27, 2011.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> "Nuclear Fuel Declaration by Iran, Turkey, and Brazil," *BBC* (May 17, 2010), [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8686728.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8686728.stm), accessed February 27, 2011.

events drove the passing of UNSCR 1929, the strongest of the six sanctions. UNSCR 1929, passed on June 9th, 2010 banned Iran from any involvement with ballistic missiles, banned all countries from selling military hardware to Iran, banned any training or assistance (to include financial) related to arms for Iran, placed a travel ban on numerous individuals, and froze the assets of the IRGC and the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines.<sup>125</sup> The final and most recent development in the history of Iran's nuclear program is that the International Atomic Energy Organization (IAEA) released a report on February 25, 2011 that continued to highlight Iran's lack of cooperation as well as question possible nuclear weapons-related research.<sup>126</sup>

### **C. INDIVIDUALS**

In understanding Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, it is important to determine who the key players are, both individuals and groups. The history described above is crucial because it provides insight into which Iranian leaders made key decisions along the way that significantly impacted the development of their nuclear program. It also shows which groups are most heavily involved in the nuclear weapons program. Knowing who the key individuals and groups are is important because they might represent possible targets for a deterrence strategy. Presently, the two main persons involved in the nuclear weapons issue are Khamenei and Ahmadinejad, while the main organizations involved are the AEOI, the IRGC, the Supreme National Security Council, and the Parliament. As such, we will evaluate each in turn, beginning with Khamenei.

#### **1. Khamenei**

To understand Khamenei's current position on the nuclear weapons program, one must first understand how Khamenei came to that position, and the extent of his power.

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<sup>125</sup> "Citing Iran's failure to clarify nuclear ambitions, UN imposes additional sanctions," *UN News Center* (June 9, 2010), <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34970&Cr=iran&Cr1=>, accessed February 27, 2011.

<sup>126</sup> Simon Henderson, "New Evidence of Iran's Nuclear Ambitions," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, (March 2, 2011), 2, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf.php?template=C05&CID=3317>, accessed March 7, 2011.

Historically in Iran, the clergy and the Shah were the two main powers.<sup>127</sup> During the 20th Century though, Reza Khan overthrew the Qajar dynasty, and with the help of the clergy, became Shah. Over the course of the next 25 years, he greatly weakened and even humiliated the Shia hierarchy through, “state-building, secularization, and modernization.”<sup>128</sup> When Khomeini joined in the revolution against the Shah’s son, Muhammad Reza Khan, he did so because he was fighting to regain what was lost at the hands of Reza Shah—clerical power.<sup>129</sup> However, Khomeini did not necessarily think that the clergy, or jurists (faqih), were the ones who should run the government. On the contrary, the commonly held belief of the day was that the only legitimate government was God’s. According to Shia Islam, the Imams were God’s representatives on earth and as such, were infallible; therefore they were the only ones who could truly govern with perfect justice.<sup>130</sup> But Khomeini was very aware that nothing written ever said that the clergy were kings, or that they were entitled to sovereignty.<sup>131</sup> Instead he said, “The laws of parliament must be the explication of the very divine law....As we have said earlier, we do not say government must devolve on the jurist (faqih). We say, however, that the government must observe the divine law...and this is not possible without the supervision of the clergy.”<sup>132</sup> This then is the reason that Iran has the requirement that the Supreme Leader must be at least an Ayatollah—an expert in the Sharia or Islamic Law—because the President and the Majles run the day-to-day operations of the government, but the Supreme Leader is the one who presides over the government and interjects himself when he observes the government undertaking an action that is contrary to Sharia law. The other time the Supreme Leader becomes involved is when there is a dispute amongst the branches of the government. Khomeini himself, while President, received a rebuke from Khomeini for saying that the government’s authority could only

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<sup>127</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 16, 18.

<sup>128</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 17.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>130</sup> Kadhim, class lecture, February 18, 2011.

<sup>131</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 18.

<sup>132</sup> As quoted in Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 20.

be exercised within the Sacred Law.<sup>133</sup> Khamenei, having learned from his rebuke, expounded upon the concept of the, “God-given absolute mandate” that Khomeini believed so important. Khamenei said:

The commandments of the ruling jurist (vali-ye fatiq) are primary commandments and are like the commandments of God...The regulations of the Islamic Republic are Islamic regulations, and obedience to them is incumbent....In reality, it is because of the legitimacy of the Mandate [of the Jurist] that they all acquire legitimacy.<sup>134</sup>

In essence, Khomeini said that because the head Jurist (Supreme Leader) had an Absolute Mandate from God to rule, then all of his commands are the same as commands from God, and all the laws passed were passed with the head Jurist’s consent: therefore the laws were to be regarded as God’s laws as well. The problem with this train of thought is that Khomeini ascribed the power that resided in the infallible Imam to fallible men. He said Ayatollahs should have the same authority as the Imam, and by doing so, he created multiple authorities for the laypeople.<sup>135</sup> He tried to mitigate this by way of stipulating that the Supreme Leader should be a source of imitation (marja-iyat) or Ayatollah, but the sole source of political power.<sup>136</sup> However this issue was never resolved before Khomeini died.

There were other problems left unresolved when Khomeini died as well. In addition to the above issue, getting a law passed had become a problem due to the Guardian Council striking down numerous laws that the Majles passed. The Guardian Council originally consisted of six Ayatollahs appointed by the Leader; though later it was expanded to twelve with the Judiciary nominating—and the Majles approving—the other six.<sup>137</sup> The Guardian Council was entrusted with the mission of, “protecting the ideological foundations of the Constitution” by nullifying “all proposed and existing laws

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<sup>133</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 34.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Kadhim, class lecture March 8, 2011.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 30.

found inconsistent with Islamic standards.”<sup>138</sup> As a result of the clash between the Guardian Council and the Majles, the Council for the Determination of Interest of the Islamic Order, or Maslahat Council (Expediency Council) was created. It consists of both clerics and non-clerics, all of whom are appointed by the Supreme Leader.<sup>139</sup> The Maslahat Council’s original purpose was to mediate the disputes between the Guardian Council and the Majles.<sup>140</sup> While this council solved one of the many problems that abounded, it did not solve them all. So shortly before Khomeini died, he ordered a review of the Constitution, and a new council was formed called the Council for the Revision of the Constitution.<sup>141</sup>

The Council for the Revision of the Constitution instituted numerous profound changes. The first major change was the abolishment of the office of the Prime Minister, which then gave the Leader the task of determining, “the general policies of the regime,” formerly the main task of the Prime Minister.<sup>142</sup> The Council then made the President, “the Head of the Executive Power,” and placed the cabinet underneath the President.<sup>143</sup> So the formerly diffuse power structure was restructured to give both the Leader and the President more power, though the Leader would ultimately receive much more than the President.

The Council further strengthened the President by giving him the power to appoint Deputy-Presidents and by giving him the chairmanship duties of the newly created Supreme National Security Council.<sup>144</sup> Ordinarily the combination of these additional powers, combined with having the cabinet fall underneath him would seemingly give the President greater power. And it would have, had the Council not also

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> “Iran: Who Holds Power,” *BBC News*, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/middle\\_east/03/iran\\_power/html/expediency\\_council.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/middle_east/03/iran_power/html/expediency_council.stm), accessed March 8, 2011.

<sup>140</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 38.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>144</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 38.

expanded the power of the Maslahat Council beyond that of mediating disputes between the Guardian Council and the Majles. The Maslahat Council was given the additional responsibility of advising the Leader on any matter he specifically referred to them, and especially on determining the regime's general policies.<sup>145</sup> This essentially made the Leader independent of the President and the cabinet by giving the Leader his own board of advisors that reported directly to him. This board of advisors also includes the Supreme Leader's representative that sits on the Supreme National Security Council, the Supreme Leader's own advisor on Foreign Affairs (instead of the Foreign Minister that is appointed by the President), as well as numerous informal connections to the clerics in Qum, all of which he uses for advice.<sup>146</sup>

Another important change the Council for the Revision of the Constitution established was one that affected the Judiciary. It replaced the Supreme Judiciary Council with a single Head of the Judiciary Power, who was to serve a five year time in office.<sup>147</sup> This also strengthened the Leader because the Leader was given the responsibility of appointing the Head of the Judiciary Power.<sup>148</sup> The Leader gained even more indirect power through this as well since the Head of the Judiciary is also responsible for appointing the remaining six members of the Guardian Council.<sup>149</sup>

An additional change, and the one that perhaps has had more impact on shaping Iranian politics than any of the others, was that the Council added an additional Article (177) to the Constitution that authorized the Leader, with the advice of the Maslahat Council, to convene an Assembly for Constitutional Review.<sup>150</sup> This Assembly had the power to create new amendments to the Constitution, but those amendments first had to have the Leader's approval before the public could vote on them in a national

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Green, Wehrey, and Wolf, *Understanding Iran*, 61.

<sup>147</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 38.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> "The Structure of Power in Iran," *The Iran Chamber Society*, [http://www.iranchamber.com/government/articles/structure\\_of\\_power.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/government/articles/structure_of_power.php), accessed March 5, 2011.

<sup>150</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 39.

referendum.<sup>151</sup> The establishment of this Assembly in 1990 would prove to have a profound impact upon the elections in 1991, and every election since.

In 1990, the Assembly used the review process to nominate a new law that gave the Guardian Council the right to approve or disapprove the candidacy of any person running for office, thus allowing the Guardian Council the ability to narrow the field down to only those candidates that the regime felt were safe.<sup>152</sup> Since no proposed amendment could be put to the vote prior to Khamenei's approval, and since this idea was ultimately adopted in the form of an amendment in 1995, then the passage of this law shows Khamenei's indirect control over elections both by allowing the amendment to become legalized, and through the now required pre-vetting process by his appointed members of the Guardian Council.

While the Council restructured the government, eliminated the Prime Minister and consolidated power for both the President and the Leader, it is important to remember that when Khamenei became the Leader, he also retained all the extra-constitutional powers that Khomeini enjoyed as well. Khamenei maintained his control of the IRGC, his ability to appoint the commander of the IRGC, and he retained executive control of the IRGC's elite branch, the Quds Force.<sup>153</sup> He also kept Khomeini's network of "clerical commisars" that permeated nearly every aspect of Iranian government and society, to include the, "government bureaucracy, military and security services, religious and mobilizational organizations, the foundations and foreign relations, as well as the provincial and municipal Friday prayer leaders."<sup>154</sup> In the land where everything must be in accordance with the religious law, ostensibly these clerics provided religious guidance to the organizations they were in, but in reality they provided an informal intelligence network and power-channel for Khomeini. Khamenei's Office of the Supreme Leader expanded this informal intelligence network even further by

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 43.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

developing special ties with both the intelligence organizations and the Special Court for Clerics.<sup>155</sup>

The Special Court for Clerics was originally established in June 1987 in order to deal with two problems.<sup>156</sup> The first was the problem of Khomeini's younger and more radical clerics that were beginning to get out of control.<sup>157</sup> The second was the problem of the Iran-Contra affair being leaked to the news by Sayyed Mehdi Hashemi.<sup>158</sup> The Court convicted Hashemi in August, and he was executed in September of 1987.<sup>159</sup> Ever since, the Leader has used the Court as his main instrument for discipline against elite but errant clerics.<sup>160</sup> This has resulted in a general "cowering" effect upon the clerics within Iran and silenced any clerics who posed a perceived threat to the regime.

At this point, it is helpful to review the Leader's power. He is the head of all three branches of government, and exercises power directly by involving himself in certain issues, and indirectly through his appointing power. Since he appoints the Head of the Judiciary, he indirectly controls the Judiciary. He also appoints half the members of the Guardian Council who have clerical oversight on the laws passed by the Majles—which is popularly elected—and he controls the Maslahat Council indirectly through his ability to appoint the members. Since the Maslahat Council both adjudicates disagreements between the Guardian Council and the Majles, it shows Khamenei's ability to exercise negative control the popularly elected Majles, meaning he can stop the Majles from doing something he does not want, but cannot legally make the Majles do something that he does want.

When a hardliner finally replaced a reformist as the president in 2005, Khamenei began to relax his supervision over the Executive branch and delegated to the Maslahat Council just not arbitration powers, but also supervisory powers over all three branches

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>156</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 34.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid..



of government.<sup>161</sup> By doing so, Khamenei appears to have relaxed the tight control he exhibited over the presidency during Khatami's time in office. During Khatami's years in office as the president, Khamenei clearly demonstrated that if he controlled both the legislative and the judiciary, the executive branch could be kept in line. However, Khamenei's power is not just limited to the government; he also exercises coercive power over the clergy through the Special Court for Clerics. In addition, as the Commander-in-Chief, he controls both the conventional armed forces, and the IRGC.<sup>162</sup> Through the IRGC and the AEOI he controls the nuclear program, and through the IRGC's subordinate branch the Basij, as well as through the clerical commissars and the Office of the Supreme Leader's connections to the intelligence services, he also exerts significant coercive power over the populace as well. Furthermore, he exercises immense indirect control over the electoral process by having power over the Guardian Council, which itself pre-screens candidates for the elections and only allows those it approves of to compete. And so it is that Khamenei is truly the holder of more power inside his country than most presidents and kings. However, he does not have absolute power. The Assembly of Experts has the function of providing oversight of the Leader and holding him accountable. The Assembly, elected by a nationwide vote, initially composed of 55 clerics and 18 non-clerics, was originally convened in August 1979 to draft a constitution based on Islam, that included the Mandate of the Jurist, and that was ultimately to create the regime of both the umma and the Imamate.<sup>163</sup> Since that first meeting, it has grown to 86 clerics, and the main function has become electing the Supreme Leader and holding him accountable.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> "Iran: Who Holds Power," *BBC News*, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/middle\\_east/03/iran\\_power/html/expediency\\_council.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/middle_east/03/iran_power/html/expediency_council.stm), accessed March 8, 2011.

<sup>162</sup> Jerrold D. Green, Frederic Wehrey, Charles Wolf Jr., *Understanding Iran*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), 88, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG771>, accessed February 3, 2011.

<sup>163</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 28.

<sup>164</sup> Ali M. Ansari, "Chapter Four: The Ahmadinejad Presidency: Domestic Policy," *Adelphi Papers*, 47: 393, (2007), 86, <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all?content=10.1080/05679320701868177>, accessed February 28, 2011.

*a. Khamenei's Political Beliefs*

Understanding Khamenei's constitutional basis for power provides a solid foundation from which to address his political beliefs. An understanding of his political beliefs greatly clarifies the seemingly complex nuclear issue. A RAND study analyzed all of Khamenei's speeches over a ten year period and found four common themes: "justice, Islam, independence, and self-sufficiency."<sup>165</sup> These were the goals of the 1979 revolution, and are embodied today in the Islamic Republic of Iran.<sup>166</sup> They are intertwined as well, with justice being embodied in Islam, self-sufficiency being required to have independence, and independence being needed in order to promote both justice and Islam.<sup>167</sup> Khamenei's position in regard to the nuclear issue is thus best viewed through those four themes due to Khamenei's belief that scientific advancement will lead to self-sufficiency, and self-sufficiency will lead to political independence.<sup>168</sup> An ideal Iran, in Khamenei's mind, is one that "is scientifically and technologically advanced enough to be self-sufficient, self-sufficient enough to be economically independent, and economically independent enough to be politically independent."<sup>169</sup> He thus views the United States' opposition to the Iranian nuclear program not as a proliferation matter, but as the United States not wanting Iran to become scientifically and technologically developed enough to be self-sufficient.<sup>170</sup> As it currently stands, Iran has to import 130,000 barrels of gasoline per day (bbl/d) in order to meet its domestic energy needs.<sup>171</sup> This must be quite alarming to the fourth-largest exporter of oil in the world, a country that exported approximately 3.9 million bbl/day of oil, or nearly 5% of the world's

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<sup>165</sup> Jerrold D. Green, Frederic Wehrey, Charles Wolf Jr., *Understanding Iran*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), 88, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG771>, accessed February 3, 2011.

<sup>166</sup> Green, Wehrey, and Wolf, *Understanding Iran*, 88.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> "Country Analysis: Iran," U.S. Energy Information Administration, (January, 2010), <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Iran/Oil.html>, accessed March 5, 2011.

demand.<sup>172</sup> When these statistics are combined with the Stanford study that predicted a slow decrease in Iran's oil production beginning within the next ten years (between 2015–2020), and with the fact that Iran receives nearly 85% of its government revenue from the sale of oil, then it is easy to see why Khamenei is concerned about self-sufficiency and the need for nuclear energy.<sup>173</sup> He is concerned about the future of his country from both an economic standpoint of being strategically vulnerable due to dependence on foreign gasoline imports, as well as a leadership standpoint of being able to provide for his people. However, a compromise of allowing Iran to have nuclear reactors does not seem to appease him either. He is intent on retaining the capability to carry out the full fuel cycle of enrichment, though he says it is both because of the economic benefit (which the RAND analysts do not agree with) and because he does not want Iran to be dependent upon foreign fuel for his nuclear reactors—the exact problem he is trying to avoid with gasoline.<sup>174</sup> Based off Khamenei's ardent beliefs in self-sufficiency and independence, it is currently improbable that he will agree to Iran giving up its enrichment program because for Khamenei, self-sufficiency leads to independence, and the benefits of being independent far outweigh the costs. The benefits outweigh the costs because Iran currently does not want to be reliant upon any foreign country for its needs so that no foreign country will have any sway over Iran being able to practice justice as embodied in Islam.

Due to the immense and vast power that Khamenei has as the Supreme Leader, it was important to understand how that power was given to him, how he uses that power both directly and indirectly, and how his beliefs affect Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons. Yet his is not the only voice that needs analyzing. The President is the second most powerful man in Iran. Though some of the President's powers have already been addressed, understanding both the constitutional basis for his power and his personal beliefs will shed further light on his role in Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons.

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> "Iran," Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5314.htm>, accessed August 2, 2010.

<sup>174</sup> Green, Wehrey, and Wolf, *Understanding Iran*, 93.

## 2. Ahmadinejad

According to the Constitution, the President is the second-most powerful man in Iran, yet has many more constraints on his power than does the Supreme Leader. As head of the executive branch, the president is still subordinate to the Supreme Leader.<sup>175</sup> Though the President has a cabinet of 22 members that report to him, those members must first be approved by the Majles.<sup>176</sup> The same constitutional changes of 1989 that further empowered the Supreme Leader, gave only slightly more power to the presidency than it previously had. The changes gave the president the power to appoint vice-presidents, and Ahmadinejad currently has eight.<sup>177</sup> The President also has the power to appoint the provincial governors as well as ambassadors, and sets the economic policy for the country.<sup>178</sup> As a result of controlling the economic policy, the president also controls all the state's resources, to include the critically important oil revenues.<sup>179</sup> In addition, the president also has the power to appoint numerous officials in lower ranks besides the governors and ambassadors, and through his power to appoint, he has tremendous power to shape and influence the regime's direction.<sup>180</sup> One of the positions that Ahmadinejad appoints is that of the Head of the AEOI.<sup>181</sup> Through his ability to appoint the head of the AEOI and to control the budget and allocate resources to the AEOI, Ahmadinejad therefore has substantial power to shape the AEOI's direction and policies as well as their funding.

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<sup>175</sup> Greg Bruno and Jamal Afridi, "Presidential Power in Iran," *Council on Foreign Relations*, (June 17, 2009), <http://www.cfr.org/iran/presidential-power-iran/p19593>, accessed March 5, 2011.

<sup>176</sup> Bruno and Afridi, Council on Foreign Relations.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid..

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid..

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> "Bomb attack survivor is new Iran atom chief," *Defence Talk*, (February 14, 2011), <http://www.defencetalk.com/bomb-attack-survivor-is-new-iran-atom-chief-31996/>, accessed March 5, 2011.

His most recent appointment to head the AEOI was Abbasi Davani, sworn in as Vice President and Head of the AEOI on February 13, 2011.<sup>182</sup> Davani was a survivor of an assassination attempt on November 29, 2010.<sup>183</sup> His predecessor, Ali Akbar Salehi, was appointed by Ahmadinejad on July 17, 2009, and was a powerful figure that drove the AEOI to bring the first nuclear power plant online during Salehi's tenure.<sup>184</sup> As a reward for his endeavors, Ahmadinejad appointed Salehi as the Foreign Minister in January, 2011.<sup>185</sup> Ahmadinejad therefore set the example for Davani that to the one who is able to accomplish Ahmadinejad's and the Leader's nuclear ambitions, high rewards are given. By appointing Davani, Ahmadinejad ensured that his desires for nuclear ambition would be in the hands of a man driven to succeed—both because of what he has already suffered for the cause, and because of the reward that may await him.

While understanding Ahmadinejad's influence over the AEOI is important, one must also understand what it was that brought Ahmadinejad to power. The main element that brought Ahmadinejad to power was the populace's reaction to Khatami, his predecessor, and Khatami's attempted reforms.<sup>186</sup> Ahmadinejad's assumption of power should be viewed as indicative of several things. The first is that his ascension to power represented the ascendancy of hardliners and thus the beginning of a new era in Iranian political history.<sup>187</sup> The second is that Khamenei, by way of the Guardian Council and the Maslahat Council, had thoroughly defeated Khatami, blocked most of his attempts at reform, and thus left the reformist movement utterly defeated and exhausted and therefore did not turn out to vote.<sup>188</sup> In essence, the voice of the Iranian people had

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<sup>182</sup> "Bomb attack survivor is new Iran atom chief," *Defence Talk*, (February 14, 2011), <http://www.defencetalk.com/bomb-attack-survivor-is-new-iran-atom-chief-31996/>, accessed March 5, 2011.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 110.

<sup>187</sup> Jerrold D. Green, Frederic Wehrey, Charles Wolf Jr., *Understanding Iran*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), 88, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG771>, accessed February 3, 2011.

<sup>188</sup> Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 110.

spoken—some active in that they voted for the hardliners, and some passive in that they simply gave up and did not vote, and the assumption of power by the hardliners represented a vote for a more aggressive nuclear program and return to the revolutionary ideals.

Just as understanding Khamenei's power was important in understanding his impact on the nuclear weapons issue, so it is important to understand Ahmadinejad as a person in order to assess his impact on the nuclear weapons program. Ahmadinejad first became involved in the Iranian revolution as part of the Hojjatiyya, which was, "a militant group devoted to the Hidden Imam that was disbanded by Khomeini's order."<sup>189</sup> Though there is some disagreement as to what exactly the Hojjatiyya believe, Ahmadinejad made it clear in a speech shortly after his inauguration that he himself believed that the mission of the revolution was to, "pave the way for the reappearance of the Mahdi. Today, we should define our economic, cultural and political policies on the basis of the Mahdi's return."<sup>190</sup> In addition, early in his first term, his administration allocated the equivalent of \$17 million dollars to build a mosque at the Jamkaran site near Qum where the well that the 12th Imam is believed to have disappeared down is located.<sup>191</sup> He is also rumored to have thrown down the names of his nominated cabinet members down the well before the Majles voted on them.<sup>192</sup> These beliefs of his are rather extreme—extreme because while nearly all Shias believe in the return of the 12th Imam, hardly anyone acts on it quite like Ahmadinejad does—and his actions thus illustrate that he views all of life through the lens of his strong faith.

These religious views also are what likely caused his subservient behavior to Khamenei when Ahmadinejad was first inaugurated. During the inauguration ceremony, Ahmadinejad kissed Khomeini's hand—something no other president had ever done. This was a symbolic act that displayed for the whole country that Ahmadinejad clearly did not see himself equal to Khomeini, and actually saw himself quite below him. Part of

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

this is because Ahmadinejad is the first Iranian President since 1981 that is not a cleric. Therefore, in a country that is founded upon the idea that the Supreme Jurist serves with the same authority as the Imams, it is no wonder that a man with such strong religious beliefs but with no actual clerical training would therefore venerate the Supreme Leader.

Yet Ahmadinejad's behavior has sometimes seemed to indicate disagreements with the Supreme Leader. Evidence of possible disagreements between Khamenei and Ahmadinejad began to surface as early as January 2008. An aide to Khamenei reportedly said that Khamenei was disappointed in Ahmadinejad's economic policy's performance.<sup>193</sup> In addition, after Ahmadinejad fired Mohammad Zolghadr as the deputy interior minister for security affairs, Khamenei appointed Zolghadr as the deputy head of the Basij.<sup>194</sup> In a sign that Ahmadinejad is also bothered by the power that Khamenei and his personal advisors wield, Ahmadinejad was angered when Ali Larijani, Khamenei's personal representative at the Supreme National Security Council, visited Egypt.<sup>195</sup> Apparently Ahmadinejad resented that the Minister of Foreign Affairs was not the one making the trip, which meant that Khamenei cut Ahmadinejad out of that particular international equation.

Another example of disagreements between the two includes the time when Khamenei had to reprimand Ahmadinejad over the UNSCR sanctions. Upon learning of the sanctions, Ahmadinejad reportedly said that the sanctions were just scraps of paper.<sup>196</sup> Khamenei disagreed and gave him a mild rebuke over the issue.<sup>197</sup>

More recently, in April 2011, Ahmadinejad and Khamenei disagreed over Ahmadinejad's firing of his Intelligence Minister, Heydar Moslehi. Ahmadinejad's closest advisor, Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, originally pushed for Moslehi's firing by accusing him of not providing good intelligence and analysis regarding recent regional

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<sup>193</sup> Nazila Fathi, "Ahmadinejad loses favor with Khamenei, Iran's top leader," *The New York Times*, (January 7, 2008), <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/07/world/africa/07iht-tehran.4.9063096.html?pagewanted=all>, accessed February 28, 2011.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ali M. Ansari, "Chapter Four," 88.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid..

events.<sup>198</sup> Reportedly Moslehi attempted to fire a senior intelligence official with whom Mashaei had close ties.<sup>199</sup> Instead, Mashaei persuaded Ahmadinejad to fire Moslehi. Uncertainty reigned for three days until Khamenei published a letter in every major Iranian media outlet that told Moslehi and his officers to return to work. Like a sullen child, Ahmadinejad decided not to come to work for eight days, in protest to Khamenei's decision. He returned to work quite quickly however, when Khamenei asked a conservative lawmaker to begin assembling a caretaker Cabinet in case Ahmadinejad needed to resign or be removed.<sup>200</sup>

Ahmadinejad then decided that he needed to reassert his power, so on May 14, 2011, he fired the Oil Minister and announced that he would serve as the interim head of the Oil Ministry—a move which would also allow him to chair the next OPEC meeting, scheduled for the summer of 2011, and thus give him a much-needed public-image boost.<sup>201</sup> The Guardian Council quickly declared that move unconstitutional and lacking Parliamentary support. That was followed by Speaker of the Parliament Ali Larijani calling on Ahmadinejad to name a new Oil Minister by June 8, 2011, which did not occur.<sup>202</sup>

Additionally, on May 25, 2011, the Parliament began an investigation into alleged misuse of state funds by Ahmadinejad. Allegedly Ahmadinejad bribed 9 million people by giving each person \$80 before the 2009 Presidential election.<sup>203</sup> Giving 9 million people \$80 before a vote is not an act taken in secret. The timing of this investigation, coming on the heels of the confrontation over the Minister of Intelligence, as well as the

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<sup>198</sup> Thomas Erdbrink, "Iranian leader rebuffs Ahmadinejad over official's dismissal," *The Washington Post*, April 20, 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/iranian-leader-rebuffs-ahmadinejad-over-officials-dismissal/2011/04/20/AFwFttDE\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/iranian-leader-rebuffs-ahmadinejad-over-officials-dismissal/2011/04/20/AFwFttDE_story.html), accessed 21 April 2011.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> "The Iranian Power Struggle and its Implications for the Nuclear Crisis," *ISIS*, June 2, 2011, <http://www.isisnucleariran.org/briefs/detail/the-iranian-power-struggle-and-its-implications-for-the-nuclear-crisis/> accessed June 6, 2011.

<sup>201</sup> Robert Tait, "Ahmadinejad and Larijani Tussle In An Oil Slick," *Radio Free Europe*, May 27, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/ahmidinejad\\_and\\_larijani\\_tussle\\_in\\_an\\_oil\\_slick/24207146.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/ahmidinejad_and_larijani_tussle_in_an_oil_slick/24207146.html), accessed Jun 16, 2011.

<sup>202</sup> "The Iranian Power Struggle and its Implications for the Nuclear Crisis," *ISIS*.

<sup>203</sup> Tait, Radio Free Europe.



Oil Minister, indicates that the tide has turned against Ahmadinejad and his formerly widespread support is now wearing thin.

When viewed from the perspectives of his constitutional empowerments, his influence over the nuclear weapons program via the AEOI, and his strong faith and initial subservience to the Supreme Leader, it is apparent the Ahmadinejad is not just a willing supporter of Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, but an ardent proponent. He is also representative of the hardliners who seek a more aggressive role for themselves and see the development of nuclear weapons as a method to gain more power and credibility for themselves. However, recently fractures have appeared in the relationship between the Khamenei and Ahmadinejad. While Ahmadinejad has been a powerful personality in the nuclear issue, it was only because he was serving to advance Khamenei's interests. With the recent souring of that relationship, Ahmadinejad may not serve as important a role in the nuclear issue. The groups that Ahmadinejad has influence over, specifically those organizations he can empower through his constitutional powers, will still remain important organizations in the nuclear weapons program. However, those organizations have not been discussed yet and therefore the focus now turns to the Atomic Energy Organization, the IRGC, and the Supreme National Security Council.

## **D. ORGANIZATIONS**

### **1. Atomic Energy Organization**

The next step in this analysis is to look at the four most important groups that are involved in the nuclear weapons program: the Atomic Energy Organization, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, and the Supreme National Security Council. The AEOI's predominant interest lies in the scientific and technical aspects of the nuclear program, the IRGC is predominantly interested in the security side of the program, and the Supreme National Security Council's predominant interest is in the national security of Iran.<sup>204</sup> Since Khamenei wants self-sufficiency and independence, the AEOI is the organization he is most reliant on to make that happen. It also means that the AEOI is the

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<sup>204</sup> Green, Wehrey, and Wolf, *Understanding Iran*, 31.

organization that will be most affected by any suspension of enrichment—one of the main sticking points of the numerous UN sanctions. From an administrative aspect, if the AEOI were to suspend enrichment, it would result in lost jobs for numerous scientists, as well as negatively impact retaining other scientists.<sup>205</sup> In addition, one expert estimated it could result in as much as, “\$5 billion lost and the failure of fifteen years of effort.”<sup>206</sup> From the technical perspective, scientists argue that suspending one of the five phases of nuclear fuel production will render the other phases ineffective.<sup>207</sup> And the AEOI is not content to just point out the scientific drawbacks to a suspension either. The AEOI is also known to argue ardently about the dangers of being reliant upon other countries for their nuclear fuel.<sup>208</sup> Regardless, from the arguments the advocates of the AEOI put forth, it is apparent that they are solely focused on their own self-interests—which is why they argue so ardently in support of the program.

## **2. Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps**

However, the AEOI is not the only organization pressing for nuclear weapons. As the Guardians of the Revolution, the IRGC is entrusted with both the missile forces as well as the actual nuclear installations.<sup>209</sup> They alone owe their loyalty to the regime since they exist solely to protect the regime, and so those two most important facets of Iranian security are entrusted to those whom the regime trusts the most. While not many details of IRGC support for the nuclear program are known, however the IRGC is known to support technology that either equalizes an opponent’s advantage, or that allows a military shortcut.<sup>210</sup> In addition, when looking at what the IRGC is tasked with as an organization (the defense of the revolution), nuclear weapons are the ultimate guarantor of both security and power.<sup>211</sup> When looking at their organizational history, nuclear

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>206</sup> Green, Wehrey, and Wolf, *Understanding Iran*, 31.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

weapons also make sense when one takes into account the tremendous casualties and massive suffering inflicted on them from chemical weapons and ballistic missiles during the Iran-Iraq war.<sup>212</sup> When a person or an organization has been beaten badly, as the IRGC and Iranian military were by Iraq and Saddam's use of chemical weapons in the later stages of the Iran-Iraq war, it is only natural to want to retaliate, or at least have the option to retaliate, in the same manner or worse. When the IRGC's control of the missile forces is evaluated in this argument, once again nuclear weapons make sense because the nuclear warheads would be joined to the missiles which would allow the IRGC to deter attacks against Iran, project their power (regionally with the missiles, globally if delivering a nuclear warhead in a non-typical method or if they develop an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)), and enhance their prestige in comparison to the conventional armed forces.<sup>213</sup> Thus it is safe to say that the IRGC is in support of the nuclear program, and since they are in control of both the ballistic missiles and the nuclear facilities, they will most likely be entrusted with deploying the nuclear weapons, should they obtain them.

### **3. Supreme National Security Council**

The next group that requires evaluation is the Supreme National Security Council, where all major national security issues are decided<sup>214</sup>. The President is the chair of the Council, while the Secretary of the Council is roughly equivalent to the U.S. National Security Advisor.<sup>215</sup> There is a representative of the Supreme Leader in the Council, as well as the Defense Minister, the Commander of the IRGC (whom the Supreme Leader appoints), the Foreign Minister, the Maslahat Council President, as well as several others, to include the Head of the AEOI on occasion.<sup>216</sup> In addition, the Supreme Leader has his own board of advisors whom he may consult on national security matters if those

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Green, Wehrey, and Wolf, *Understanding Iran*, 60.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>216</sup> Green, Wehrey, and Wolf, *Understanding Iran*, 65.

advisors are not present in the Supreme National Security Council. Regardless, the composition of the Council also happens to be a broad representation of the elite as well, who often have as much informal power as they do formal power.<sup>217</sup> Therefore both the formal and informal power structures encourage a consensus-based, decision-making process, which then implies that everyone is behind the decision, and thus all are in it together.<sup>218</sup> This serves the added advantage of “closing the gaps” so that foreign powers cannot exploit any differences that might exist otherwise.<sup>219</sup> The Supreme Leader is the final decision-maker, but instead of charting the course and basing decisions off a desired end-state, he instead seems to balance factional demands.<sup>220</sup> Though he has immense power, he is more concerned domestically with maintaining the status quo, which results in playing sides off one another with a bias towards the hardliners, and does not provide much visionary leadership.<sup>221</sup> As a result, Iranian foreign policy appears largely incoherent to the outsider, while the insiders on the Council have the code that unlocks the motives behind Iran’s sometimes contradictory stances.<sup>222</sup>

Inside the Council, the AEOI voices strong support for the nuclear program and can provide input into the technical aspects of the program, highlight the valuable knowledge and experience already gained, and emphasize the negative impact that a long suspension of activities would have on both the retention of qualified scientists and their morale.<sup>223</sup> The Foreign Minister and the Council Secretary can provide insight into the diplomatic impact that continual pursuit of the nuclear program will have on relations with Europe, and the IAEA, as well as remind the Council of international obligations and by doing so, craft a better diplomatic strategy.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>218</sup> Green, Wehrey, and Wolf, *Understanding Iran*, 61.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>223</sup> Green, Wehrey, and Wolf, *Understanding Iran*, 61.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

This is why Khamenei's and Khatami's decision to emplace Ruhani as the Council Secretary in 2003 was so important—it reflected the then pragmatic approach that the two most important leaders in Iran wanted to take regarding the nuclear program. Likewise, that is why the hardliner's ascendancy to power in the 2004 elections proved to be a change from this pragmatic position. The hardliners replaced many of the pragmatists in the key governmental posts, and Khamenei, seeing “the will of the people,” saw his opportunity and replaced pragmatic Ruhani with Larijani. The Foreign Minister and Defense Minister also changed, and thus since the 2004 elections, the Council has been dominated by conservatives, the IRGC, and the AEOI. As a result of the hardliners' support of the nuclear program, as well as the IRGC's support and the AEOI's support, and the momentum the nuclear program currently has, the costs of reversing or freezing any part of the program are likely to greatly outweigh the benefits of continuing, and therefore it is not likely that Iran will agree to suspend enrichment, let alone to agree to give it up entirely.

#### **4. Majles**

The final group to evaluate is that Majles. The President has no constitutional power over the Majles, though historically if the President is popular, the Majles supports the President. The role of the Majles in the nuclear program historically was not one of day-to-day importance; however in 2004 the conservatives gained power in the Majles. Of the 152 new Parliamentarians elected in 2004, 91 were former IRGC members in the past, and another 34 former IRGC officers were in senior-level posts in the government.<sup>225</sup> As such, the Majles has become more of a conservative-dominated mouthpiece of the people that serves to send messages to Khamenei and the leadership. These messages include the idea that the people (and the hardliners and conservatives) are either tired of negotiations, as in 2004; or tired of the delay in resuming the nuclear program, as in 2005; or that the Majles and the people were angry at how Iran was being treated by the IAEA, as in 2006. None of the bills the Majles passed on each of those occasions resulted or obligated the government to actually do anything, and therefore the

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<sup>225</sup>Green, Wehrey, and Wolf, *Understanding Iran*, 58.

role of Majles has just been to send messages to the leadership. It is important to note however, that parliamentary candidates are vetted by the Guardian Council before even being allowed to run. As a result, the Majles is not an accurate mouthpiece of the people—it is a mouthpiece of those the regime deems safe enough to be the “elected leaders” of the people. So just because the Majles passes a bill does not mean the bill has the full support of the people of Iran, nor does it mean that the bill has even the full support of the Majles and therefore of the people. A bill’s passing more often means just that on the day the bill was voted on, the majority of the parliamentarians present supported the bill.

Since Ali Larijani became Speaker of the Majles in 2009 and instituted Parliamentary oversight of the nuclear negotiations, however, a new trend may have begun: Parliamentary Oversight. It will remain to be seen however, just how much “Parliamentary” oversight the Majles exercises. Will it be true oversight whereby Parliament does not allow any nuclear negotiations to go forward unless those negotiations are within the framework established by the Parliament? Or was that speech just a cover for Khamenei and Larijani to consolidate more power within the Supreme Leader’s hands or further restrain Ahmadinejad’s power? Regardless, the recent confrontations between Ahmadinejad and Khamenei seem to indicate to Larijani and the Majles that Ahmadinejad’s long-standing support may be coming to an end. The Majles may serve an indirect role in the nuclear weapons issue if it serves to impeach Ahmadinejad and cause early elections.

### III. DETERRENCE MODELS

After determining the role of the two men and four organizations most important to the nuclear weapons program and how they exercise power directly and indirectly, the key question becomes, “which deterrence theory or blend of theories most closely matches the observed behavior?” According to Classical Realism theory, the two most dominate actions a state can pursue are increasing its own security and increasing its own power.<sup>226</sup> Khamenei’s desire for the independence that comes from self-sufficiency is best interpreted as Khamenei not wanting his country to be strategically vulnerable. As such, he is ultimately concerned with Iran’s security and, therefore, a nuclear energy program in which Iran is able to produce its own fuel will help Iran become more secure. In addition, according to the February 25, 2011 International Atomic Energy Agency report on Iran’s nuclear program, work seemingly continues on nuclear weapons-type research, and since Khamenei has not stopped such work, it is safe to assume that he likewise desires nuclear weapons—or the ability to produce one quickly, if needed.<sup>227</sup> This is best interpreted as Khamenei viewing nuclear weapons as a way to increase both Iran’s power and its security.

Classical Realism further postulates that states are rational actors.<sup>228</sup> The Rational Actor theory says that states behave in a rational way, meaning their actions are best explained by showing that the benefits outweighed the costs of the actions they undertook. <sup>229</sup> Khamenei’s desire for independence and therefore self-sufficiency show that he values these two ideals far above almost everything else. In addition, given his immense power, most subordinates likewise “want what the boss wants.” Given that the consensus-making that occurs in the Supreme National Security Council is designed to

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<sup>226</sup> Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essense of Decision* (New York: Longman, 1999), 28.

<sup>227</sup> Simon Henderson, “New Evidence of Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions,” *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, (March 2, 2011), 2, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf.php?template=C05&CID=3317>, accessed March 7, 2011.

<sup>228</sup> Karen Mingst, *Essentials of International Relations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (New York: W.W. Norton, June 19, 2004), 55-82.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

prevent foreign powers from exploiting perceived rifts within Iran's government, Iran's behavior is best viewed as "Unitary." From 2003–2004, the time period after President Bush gave his "Axis of Evil" speech and after the first UNSCR went into effect, Khamenei and Khatami were willing to negotiate with the U.S. in a "grand bargain" that included offers on Iran's participation in Iraq, Iran's nuclear program, and Iran's support to both Hamas and Hezbollah.<sup>230</sup> This offer shows that when the threat is strong enough and credible enough, it affects Khamenei's perceptions of his costs and benefits, with the result being that Khamenei is willing to negotiate.

However there are several instances in Iran's nuclear history and its history in general that illustrate that Iran might not always behave rationally. From Iran's nuclear history, it could be argued that Iran was irrational when it did not ratify the agreement reached on the Paris Negotiations in late 2004, which offered membership in the World Trade Organization, among other incentives, if Iran simply stopped enriching uranium. Likewise, it could be argued that in 2006 Iran again was irrational when it did not accept the package of incentives from the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to halt enrichment. The critique to both these arguments though is difficult to argue. The critique is that since Iran did not ratify the Paris Negotiations or accept the package of incentives, then Iran must have simply viewed the long-term benefits of continued uranium enrichment as outweighing the short-term costs it would incur by doing so. The problem with this critique is that it assumes rationality as the foundation for its argument and thus uses circular logic to prove its point. In actuality, the reason why Iran may not have accepted the incentives might be because the internal debate took too long to gain consensus. This would then imply that Iran is not fully unitary, and the costs and benefits of a particular action or decision might not be the same for the different groups or individuals that comprise the government. Furthermore, in 2003 after Bush made his "Axis of Evil" speech and invaded Iraq, Khamenei and Khatami ordered the enrichment program suspended in order to facilitate Ruhani's negotiations with the EU-3, but in 2004 the conservatives swept into power in the Parliament and started threatening to pass a bill

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<sup>230</sup> John Tirman, "A New Approach to Iran," *MIT Center for International Studies*, (April 2009), 32, [http://web.mit.edu/cis/Publications/IRAN-Tirman\\_2009.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/cis/Publications/IRAN-Tirman_2009.pdf), accessed February 26, 2011.



obligating Iran to resume its enrichment program. While this does not confirm or deny rationality, it does indicate both a lack of unity once more, as well as a disagreement amongst the leadership as to the costs and benefits of uranium enrichment and negotiations.

Another problem with trying to define Iran's behavior as rational or irrational is that they likely weight the costs and benefits differently than we do. As such, any attempt to define their behavior based of rationality may be based on a potentially flawed understanding of how they view the costs and benefits of each action. As a result of this and the examples provided, the Unitary and Rational Actor theory does not provide a sufficient explanation of Iran's behavior.

There is greater explanatory power though, when Unitary and Rational Actor theory is paired with both Organizational Process and Governmental Politics theories. The Organizational Process theory says that a government is essentially nothing more than a conglomeration of organizations.<sup>231</sup> The way to explain a government's behavior is to understand that behavior as the output of the standard operating procedures and interests of the organizations that comprise the government.<sup>232</sup> Under this theory, the output/government behavior that is produced usually looks like the output of those organizations that are strongest in the government.<sup>233</sup> Thus Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons can be interpreted as the obvious output for Iran based off the strong role that the conservatives played in the Parliament, as well as the role the AEOI and the IRGC play in the issue. Pursuing the development of nuclear weapons is something that the AEOI has had a special research unit for since the mid-1970s, while pursuing nuclear energy is explicitly why the AEOI was first created. The main sticking point the West has with Iran's peaceful nuclear program is that Iran is also enriching uranium far beyond what a peaceful program needs. Therefore the West demands a complete halt to all enrichment. The problem for the AEOI lies in the fact that Iran cannot completely halt the enrichment process without also halting the research and enrichment that is occurring

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<sup>231</sup> Allison and Zelkow, *Essence of Decision*, pg 391.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

for the peaceful energy purposes. Admittedly, there is no known peaceful purpose for enriching uranium beyond the 20% threshold. Also research into the development of nuclear weapons is not routine; however, it is in the interests of the AEOI since they have a history of having a special unit devoted to developing a nuclear weapon, so this behavior is explainable because it is in the interests of the AEOI. As a result, continual pursuit of nuclear energy and uranium enrichment are the obvious choices for the AEOI to support because both are what they were designed for in the first place and it best serves their own interests. This is in keeping with the predictions of this theory in the first chapter. Additionally, since the leadership of the AEOI is a Vice Presidential position, it has a powerful voice that it can use to express its opinion in the nuclear debate inside the Supreme National Security Council both directly, when asked to attend, and indirectly through Ahmadinejad, its biggest supporter.

Likewise the standard organizational output of the IRGC is defense of the revolution, meaning the regime. Any organization that is tasked with defending something will naturally want the best weapons and best training in order to provide the best defense. So it is with the IRGC. It is already entrusted with the ballistic missile forces and the nuclear installations, as well as its own navy component, air force component, intelligence component, unconventional warfare component (Quds Force), paramilitary component, and even an economic enterprise component.<sup>234</sup> It also has a history of looking for “game-changing” weapons and technology to continue strengthening itself. The only thing it does not have—and some of its enemies do have—is nuclear weapons. Therefore it is only natural for the IRGC to pursue the development of nuclear weapons, as was predicted in the first chapter. Given that it controls over 1/3 of Iran’s economy directly and 2/3s indirectly, and given that numerous leaders within the government and the executive branch in particular are IRGC veterans from the Iran-

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<sup>234</sup> “IRGC,” *Middle East Affairs Information Center*, [http://www.crethiplethi.com/wp-content/uploads/revolutionary\\_guard\\_structure\\_in\\_iran.gif](http://www.crethiplethi.com/wp-content/uploads/revolutionary_guard_structure_in_iran.gif), accessed December 2, 2010.

Iraq war, then the IRGC also has substantial formal and informal power channels to both support and push for support for pursuing nuclear weapons.<sup>235</sup>

The Supreme National Security Council is another venue for the hardliners to use their informal and former power channels to support the development of nuclear weapons. Since the mission of the Council is to decide upon national security matters, it is safe to say that the members of the Council look to keep Iran secure, for it is in both their own individual interest as well as the Council's interests. Since nuclear weapons are the most powerful weapons possible, the Organizational Process model easily explains why the Council would support the development or pursuit of nuclear weapons.

The Majles also supports the development of nuclear weapons. Of the current members, 195 of the 290 members are conservatives.<sup>236</sup> Since conservatives support the nuclear program, then the conservatives dominate the legislative schedule and are able to create and pass bills to ensure that the Supreme Leader knows the will of the people (or at least of the conservatives). As a result, the Organizational Process model easily explains the parliamentary support for the nuclear program, because the parliament is dominated by the group who most supports the nuclear program. As a result, the Organizational Process model provides more explanatory power than just Unitary, Rational Actor theory, yet still it too is not able to explain everything.

One problem is that the groups, whose routines and interests supposedly determine the actions of the government, are composed of individuals with their own agendas. Sometimes those agendas might not synchronize well with the overall goals of the group. This becomes a problem when the most powerful person in the group begins to sway the group in order to accomplish his agenda, and opponents of that agenda inside the group lack sufficient power to prevent the group from following the individual's agenda. For instance, while the pursuit of nuclear energy is in the best interests of the AEIOI, research into the development of nuclear weapons might not be in the group's best

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<sup>235</sup> "Profile: Iran's Revolutionary Guards," *BBC News*, October 26, 2007, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy\\_of\\_Iran#Islamic\\_Revolutionary\\_Guard-Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Iran#Islamic_Revolutionary_Guard-Corps), accessed December 9, 2010.

<sup>236</sup> "Iranian Parliament," Inter-Parliamentary Union, [http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2149\\_E.htm](http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2149_E.htm), accessed October 5, 2011.

interests because it may ultimately serve to bring unwanted international attention upon the group, resulting in the AEOI's demise. However, conducting research into the development of nuclear weapons might be in the best interests of the President of the AEOI, because if the AEOI is able to develop a nuclear weapon under his leadership, then he will likely be richly rewarded by President Ahmadinejad, as the former head of the AEOI was. In order to evaluate this individual-level bargaining and its impact on a nation's actions, the Governmental Politics theory is needed.

The Governmental Politics theory further elucidates Iran's reasons for pursuing nuclear weapons. This theory says that government action is a political result based off of bargaining amongst the key participants.<sup>237</sup> Khamenei enjoys vast power as Supreme Leader, but he leaves most of the day-to-day operations of the government in the hands of his subordinates so that he can gain objectivity over the debates between the pragmatists and the hardliners on the Supreme National Security Council. As Commander-in-Chief, the Supreme National Security Council provides him expert advice and recommendations on matters of national security. However, the members of the Council work quite hard at reaching a consensus before they undertake any action or recommend any action to Khamenei. This consensus-making that occurs often involves political bargaining by each side in order to arrive at a decision or recommendation that all members agree to. Although the President of the AEOI and the Commander of the IRGC are ardent supporters of the nuclear weapons program, the Council must still listen to all parties concerned in order to arrive at a decision that is amenable to all, and thus amenable to the Supreme Leader. So Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons can also be interpreted through the lens of bargaining and consensus-making that occurs amongst the members of the Supreme National Security Council, which is predicted by the Governmental Politics model.

The major flaw in the Governmental Politics model is the lack of knowledge as to what exactly is discussed within the Supreme National Security Council meetings. Without knowing who attended the meetings and without knowing what was discussed

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<sup>237</sup> Allison and Zerkow, *Essence of Decision*, pg 391.

and agreed to at each meeting, it is impossible to prove conclusively that Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons is the direct result of bargaining that occurs between the major players. Furthermore, it is difficult to say that the development of nuclear weapons was driven by political bargaining when the nuclear weapons have not yet been developed. Therefore it is impossible to assess the predictive usefulness of this theory since none of the predictions of individual and group benefits have yet to materialize due to the lack of successful development of nuclear weapons.

While Realism provides decent explanatory power of Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, Liberalism, or more specifically Neo-Liberal Institutionalism, does not. Neo-Liberal Institutionalism asks why states cooperate.<sup>238</sup> Ultimately, they argue, the reason states cooperate is because each is better off cooperating with the other given that the states in question will continue to interact with each other indefinitely.<sup>239</sup> The main critique of this theory, when applying it to Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons is quite simply that the U.S. and Iran have not decided to cooperate yet, even though it is clearly in each other's best interests. Indeed, although there have been multiple opportunities to do so, ranging from Khatami's "grand bargain" in 2003 to President Clinton's 1998 overtures and Secretary Albright's remarks, they have all been misunderstood.<sup>240</sup> Regardless, the two states have not yet cooperated on this issue, and therefore Neo-Liberal Institutionalism provides does not help in explaining Iran's behavior.

This analysis began by delineating the history of Iran's nuclear program with the goal of identifying the most important entities that are involved in the nuclear weapons program. While arguments could be made for a more exhaustive list of the individuals involved, the two most important were highlighted. Reviewing Khamenei's elaborate formal and informal, direct and indirect power channels and structures proved enlightening in understanding just how powerful he is and why he is the ultimate decision-maker. Knowing his political beliefs and his views on the strategic vulnerability of Iran in its reliance upon foreign powers for both gasoline and nuclear fuel sheds

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<sup>238</sup> Mingst, *Essentials of International Relations*, 63.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>240</sup> Tirman, *MIT Center for International Studies*, 12.

tremendous light on Iran's recalcitrance to halt uranium enrichment. It also helps prove the idea that Classical Realism is the best perspective through which to view Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons. However, understanding Ahmadinejad's role in the program by both being a vocal supporter of it in the Supreme National Security Council, as well as by appointing the head of the AEOI and funding the AEOI, is important in understanding what his powers are, and what his powers are not. It is also useful in that it provides evidence that Governmental Politics Theory provides additional explanatory power in explaining Iran's continued pursuit of nuclear weapons. Knowing the roles of the AEOI, the IRGC, and the Supreme National Security Council is important because knowledge of those organizations and their interests shed light on how Khamenei is influenced to make decisions. It also helps explain why his decisions are often made as a result of domestic politics rather than an overarching strategic plan and therefore why Governmental Politics provides additional insight into Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons. Khamenei's overarching role in both Iran in general, and the nuclear program and nuclear weapons program specifically, indicate that Unitary, Rational Actor Theory provides sufficient explanatory power; however, including both Organizational Process and Government Politics Theories provides a more robust explanatory foundation for the development of an effective deterrence strategy.

This ultimately means that no one single theory of deterrence accurately describes Iran and Iran's behavior. As a result, any deterrence strategy that is founded upon only one deterrence theory is going to fail. Complex problems, such as deterring Iran from pursuing nuclear weapons, have complex solutions, not simple one-theory solutions. Iran is best viewed through a combination of lenses because the key individuals who hold sway over the most important groups are rational and those individuals undertake actions that are best for them, their groups, and Iran.

## IV. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Since there is no one particular deterrence lens that best describes Iran, then multiple lenses must be involved in the formulation of a good deterrence strategy, specifically Rational Actor, Organizational Process, and Government Politics models. This strategy should therefore include measures directed against each level discussed: the Supreme Leader, the President, the AEOI, the IRGC, the Supreme National Security Council and the Majles. In the book, *Which Path to Persia?*, the authors explain the nine possible policy options to use against Iran, encompassed under four broad categories: The Diplomatic Options that include the approaches of Persuasion and Engagement; the Military Options that include the approaches of Invasion, Airstrikes, and Allowing an Israeli Strike; the Regime Change Options that include Supporting a Popular Uprising (Velvet Revolution), Inspiring an Insurgency using the minority and opposition groups, and the Coup approach in which the U.S. would support a military move against the regime; and the final possible approach is Containment, which is the fall-back plan in case the other approaches do not work.<sup>241</sup> While this book was the definitive work on the subject when it was published in 2009, much has changed in the two and half years since its publication. The policy options have not changed significantly, but the international situation has and thus has made the Persuasion option the most likely to succeed. As such, this chapter will not set forth a new policy option, but instead will explain and expand upon the Persuasion option explained in the book and integrate the Regime Change options as well in order to try to fix specific benefits and specific costs to each of the individuals and groups identified as being most important to the nuclear weapons issue earlier for the purpose of trying to convince Iran to change its behavior.

### A. PERSUASION OPTION

The Persuasion Option is easily understandable in terms of costs and benefits. This option seeks to increase Iran's costs for pursuing nuclear weapons and enriching

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<sup>241</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009).

uranium, as well as increase the benefits of Iran halting the same behavior. The U.S. must use the UN Security Council to get Iran to halt its behavior because after 30 years of sanctions against Iran, the U.S. has very few remaining ties that it can threaten to cut, which is the traditional method of signaling to another country that its behavior will not be tolerated.<sup>242</sup> The main problem inhibiting the imposition of strong sanctions against Iran has been Russia and China watering the sanctions down in the UN Security Council. This has allowed Iran to escape the most damaging sanctions so far. The two main reasons for both countries watering down the sanctions is both because it is in each country's interests to do so, and because neither country believes that the U.S. has been serious about offering substantial incentives to Iran.<sup>243</sup> As a result, when threatened with sanctions, Iran has come to rely on both countries and pander to their needs in order to persuade them to water down the sanctions. The new strategy should ensure that the members of the UN Security Council agree upon the costs and benefits before either are offered or threatened.<sup>244</sup> In particular, if both Russia and China agree to the sanctions and benefits ahead of time though, and the sanctions are written into the UN Security Council resolutions that are demanding the halt of Iran's behavior, then it will serve as a signal to Iran that its benefactors are no longer going to shield it from the coercive treatment of the West, and it will make it much more difficult for Iran to escape the sanctions.<sup>245</sup> There are several recommendations provided later in the chapter that provide details on how to entice Russia and China away from Iran.

In addition, there need to be specific triggers tied to the sanctions so that Iran knows very clearly what to expect if it undertakes an action that is not approved by the UN Security Council.<sup>246</sup> Those triggers should include Iran's withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (this could be an indication of Iran attempting a "breakout" development of nuclear weapons), and Iranian unwillingness to sign the additional

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<sup>242</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 35.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.



protocol of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (this protocol provides for much tougher and invasive inspections).<sup>247</sup> The triggers should also include any additional enrichment of Iran's low-enriched uranium (LEU) beyond the 20% threshold, and any failure on Iran's part to convert its current stocks of LEU into fuel rods for the nuclear reactors.<sup>248</sup> The final trigger should be Iran's failure to change the storage site of its LEU from next to the centrifuge cascades (where it could be quickly enriched to the level needed for weapons), to a storage facility located in a different area and away from its centrifuge plants.<sup>249</sup>

The last key factor for this strategy is timing: when should the costs and benefits be presented to Iran, and how should they be presented—publically or secretly? The last ten years have seen several very favorable events happen for Iran, most notably the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001, and of the Ba'ath Regime and Saddam Hussein in 2003. However, a number of bad events have also occurred that may have placed the Supreme Leader of Iran into a losses mindset. The "losses mindset" is best described as how people are not as willing to take a risk in order to make a gain as they are in order to prevent a loss.<sup>250</sup> These events include the public rift that is currently occurring between Khamenei and Ahmadinejad in which Khamenei has issued a thinly-veiled threat to eliminate the position of the Presidency.<sup>251</sup> There is also the pressure of the UNSCR sanctions and the U.S. unilateral sanctions that are weighing down the Iranian economy and are greatly hindering foreign investment, the ability of Iran to repair and upgrade its oil refineries, and its ability to procure necessary technology. On top of that, Iran is still

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<sup>247</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 46.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>250</sup> Jeffrey D. Berejikian, "A Cognitive Theory of Deterrence," *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 2 (Mar., 2002), 165-183. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1555297> Accessed: 24/06/2009 15:41.

<sup>251</sup> Ali Akbar Dareini and Brian Murphy, "Iran's Supreme Leader ups fight with Ahmadinejad," *The Associated Press*, October 19, 2011, <http://www.windstream.net/news/read.php?id=18818734&ps=1018&cat=&cps=0&lang=en&src=email&page=3>, accessed October 19, 2011.

struggling with a 14.6% unemployment rate.<sup>252</sup> Then there is the problem of the Stuxnet virus. The virus has allegedly destroyed over 1,000 IR-I type centrifuges, which is approximately 10% of its enrichment capability.<sup>253</sup> This caused Iran to shut down the enrichment program for months before they were able to determine the cause of the problem.<sup>254</sup> In addition, the recent move of Khaled Meshaal, the leader of Hamas, from Syria to Egypt was also detrimental to Iran.<sup>255</sup> Meshaal had to leave Syria because Iran was pressuring him and Hamas to support Assad's government even though the government was attacking the Muslim Brotherhood who were kinsmen of Meshaal's.<sup>256</sup> As a result, Meshaal chose not to take sides and instead opened talks with the Egyptian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>257</sup> He was allowed to move back to Egypt but under the terms of having to reconcile with Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Prime Minister, and acquiescence to the prisoner-swap deal involving the captured Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit.<sup>258</sup> This move served as another blow to Iran's regional influence as it moved one of Iran's main proxies for interfering with the Middle East Peace process out of Syria where Iran had excellent access, and into Egypt—one of Iran's regional rivals. Another blow to Iran's regional prestige occurred in 2009—and is still simmering below the surface—when hundreds of thousands of people across Iran protested the Presidential elections. A significant blow to Khamenei personally came when he issued a religious decree for everyone to return to their homes—and no one obeyed. He had to resort to using the Basij and the IRGC to restore order.

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<sup>252</sup> Patrick Clawson, "Iran Makes Itself More Vulnerable to Outside Pressure," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, August 4, 2011, <http://washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=3391>, accessed August 8, 2011.

<sup>253</sup> David Albright, Paul Brannon, and Christina Walrond, "Stuxnet Malware and Natanz: Update of ISIS December 22, 2010 Report," *Institute for Science and International Security*, February 15, 2011, <http://isis-online.org/isis-reports/detail/stuxnet-malware-and-natanz-update-of-isis-december-22-2010-reportsupa-href1/>, accessed February 22, 2011.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Martin Indyk, "The Iranian Connection," *Foreign Policy*, October 12, 2011, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/12/the\\_iranian\\_connection](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/12/the_iranian_connection), accessed October 13, 2011.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

In addition to Iran's economic problems, unemployment problems, nuclear program problems, and international-terrorist-groups-defecting-to-the-other-side problems, Iran is also facing smoldering ethnic-minority unrest. Pejak, the militant wing of the Kurdish separatist group the PKK (or Kurdistan Workers' Party) has been conducting attacks along the Turkish border, while the Balochi terrorist group Jundallah has been conducting attacks in the southeast province of Baluchistan.<sup>259</sup> All of the above sets the stage for interpreting Khamenei's behavior through the lens of him being in a "losses mindset" and therefore risk-tolerant. As such, when an opponent is in a losses mindset, one should lay out the deterrence strategy in "gains" terms.<sup>260</sup> This means that the way the proposed deterrence strategy should be presented to Iran is to only present the incentives to Iran, and allow them to find out about the disincentives and sanctions through their own channels. Additionally, the incentives should be played up, while the sanctions and disincentives should be played down.<sup>261</sup> Furthermore, however the Administration wishes to present it—either to the Iranian people publically, or to the Iranian leadership privately—care should be taken to emphasize the benefits to the audience that is receiving the message, and care should be taken to downplay the threats. If it is presented to the people publically, it will only be seen as reinforcing each individual's already determined viewpoint. This may serve to galvanize the pragmatists and reformers, which may cause the hardliners, who are the ones in power, to feel threatened and not take the offer. As a result, if the Administration and the UNSC truly want Iran to accept the deal, then they should present the deal to the Iranian leadership privately, but with the understanding that if the leadership does not provide an answer within a certain timeframe, then the UNSC will go public with the details.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> William Lowther and Colin Freeman, "US funds terror group to sow chaos in Iran," The Telegraph, February 25, 2007, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1543798/US-funds-terror-groups-to-sow-chaos-in-Iran.html>, accessed October 20, 2011.

<sup>260</sup> Jeffrey D. Berejikian, "A Cognitive Theory of Deterrence," *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 2 (Mar., 2002), 165-183. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1555297> Accessed: 24/06/2009 15:41.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 48.

Now that the Persuasion Option has been defined, it is time to elaborate on the incentives/benefits and the disincentives/costs and benefits that should be proposed to Iran. There are four main categories that the proposed incentives fall into: Nuclear Energy, Economic Inducements, Security Guarantees, and Political Incentives.<sup>263</sup>

## **B. INCENTIVES**

### **1. Nuclear Energy**

When discussing nuclear energy, the incentives should include the already-proposed light-water reactors, as well as in the short-run there should be a commitment from another country to provide nuclear fuel to Iran.<sup>264</sup> In the long run, due to counter-proliferation fears, the U.S. should take the lead in developing an international framework for civilian nuclear energy cooperation.<sup>265</sup> This should ultimately result in an organization, located within the United Nations bureaucracy, which is responsible for overseeing and supervising a program whereby those countries that want nuclear energy programs are able to obtain advice, assistance, and both the provision of nuclear fuel and the disposal of spent nuclear fuel, for developing a safe and peaceful nuclear energy program. This program would likely rely on light-water reactors since the spent nuclear fuel they generate is harder to quickly convert to fissile material, and because those types of reactors are generally much easier to monitor.<sup>266</sup> These are the same reasons why the light-water reactors should once again be offered to Iran. Additionally, in the proposal to Iran, there should be a stipulation that the spent fuel is returned to the providing country so that the Iranians would not be able to use the fuel to make into a bomb, much as the Iranians have with Russia regarding the fuel at the Bushehr nuclear power plant.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 37.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> National Security Council, *National Security Strategy*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, May, 2010), 23.

<sup>266</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 37.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

## 2. Economic Inducements

Since Iran's economy is currently in tough times, economic inducements are an essential element of the new strategy. The Bush Administration offered Iran membership into the World Trade Organization, the resumption of Iran's pre-sanctions trade with both Japan and Europe, and the lifting of international sanctions.<sup>268</sup> However, these incentives were not enough to induce Iran to agree to the deal. As a result, the new incentives need to be much stronger and much more powerful. In addition to the already offered incentives, they should include provisions that make allowance for Iran to receive support from international financial institutions such as the World Bank.<sup>269</sup> In addition, the new incentives should also include a universal settlement of all claims between the United and Iran, an amount that the Iranians consider to be significant.<sup>270</sup> There should also be measures that provide incentives for foreign firms to invest in Iran, such as trade credits and investment guarantees.<sup>271</sup> Last, and perhaps most importantly, the measures should include a provision to lift all sanctions against Iran—both international and unilateral.<sup>272</sup> The lifting of the unilateral U.S. sanctions might have a game-changing impact on Iran's decision to accept the proposal since most Iranians and Khamenei's chief economic officials eagerly desire it.<sup>273</sup> In addition to potentially jump-starting the sputtering Iranian economy, lifting the unilateral sanctions against Iran would also result in the opening of a large foreign market to U.S. companies. This would potentially generate more jobs in the U.S. Lifting both sets of sanctions would also signal to Iran that if Iran agrees to stop enriching uranium and halt its nuclear weapons program, then the world would no longer see it as a threat. These measures are designed to appeal to Khamenei and both his advisors as well as the Supreme National Security Council and the Majles. All three will benefit from accepting these measures. Khamenei will be seen

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<sup>268</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 38.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

as a great leader for taking on the West and gaining greater rewards for driving a hard bargain. The Supreme National Security Council members will see a lifting of the sanctions against selling arms to Iran, so they will be able to better arm Iran. The members of the Majles will each individually use the great breakthrough with the West as a basis for reelection.

### **3. Security Guarantees**

With the recent announcement of the withdrawal of all American forces from Iraq by the end of 2011, the U.S. is already taking substantial measures—whether intentionally or not—to reduce Iran’s legitimate security concerns. However, a significant U.S. presence will remain in the Persian Gulf, despite the withdrawal of troops from Iraq, both because of the concerns of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states who look to the U.S. for protection, and because of the vital national interests the U.S. has in that region. Consequently, while the threat of a massive ground invasion has been reduced, the threat of coercive military action against Iran has not ceased completely—there are also still thousands of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan, in addition to those stationed in the Persian Gulf area. As a result, before Iran accepts the new deal, some security guarantees may be needed.<sup>274</sup> Some have proposed that President Obama could publically pledge not to attack Iran; much like President Kennedy did for Cuba during the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis.<sup>275</sup> It is not likely however, that this by itself will be enough to convince the Iranians that the U.S. is sincere. Thus, others have recommended limiting the number of U.S. aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf at any one time.<sup>276</sup> Since the idea of hindering the United States’ ability to, if needed, act quickly and forcefully in the Middle East is unappealing to many Americans, and since Iran wants to increase its regional influence, then perhaps a win-win strategy is for the United States to initiate a Commission on Persian Gulf Security and Cooperation which involves all the Gulf States, the U.S., and Iran (the Commission on Security and Cooperation in

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<sup>274</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 40.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

Europe could be used as a good starting point).<sup>277</sup> In addition to giving Iran a voice in the security matters of the Persian Gulf, it would also increase Iran's political influence in the region. These measures will serve to gain support amongst the members of the Supreme National Security Council, Ahmadinejad, Khamenei's advisors and Khamenei himself since it will serve to increase Iran's regional influence and status.

#### **4. Political Incentives**

The creation of a Commission on Persian Gulf Security and Cooperation organization would be helpful in both addressing Iran's legitimate security concerns as well as provide Iran a greater role in the region. This could be a test-bed to see how well Iran is able to interact with other countries in a multi-national forum, while not being the hegemon.<sup>278</sup> It would also allow the Iranians' security concerns to be assuaged by the Gulf States, instead of just the United States. The security architecture and agreements that may result from such a Commission would likely have additional second- and third-order effects of lowering the price of oil globally as the perception of relative stability descends on nervous speculators.

Furthermore, if Iran accepts the deal and both the international and unilateral sanctions are lifted, it would potentially clear the way for Iran to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO—which includes Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan as full members, and India, Iran, Pakistan, and Mongolia as observer states ) which was primarily a security coordination and cooperation organization, and is starting to expand into a political and economic cooperation organization.<sup>279</sup> Though Iran applied for full-membership in the organization in 2008, it was not granted status due to the members adopting membership

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<sup>277</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 40.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>279</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Iran: US Concerns and Policy Responses*, by Kenneth Katzman, CRS Report RL32048 (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional Information and Publishing, September 22, 2010), 42.

rules that forbade admission to any country under UNSC sanctions.<sup>280</sup> Thus removing those sanctions would theoretically pave the way for Iran to gain admission to an organization whose members represent half and of the world's population, and therefore provide a stronger voice in the region. This measure would affect members of the Supreme National Security Council, Ahmadinejad, Khamenei's advisors and Khamenei himself since it will serve to increase Iran's regional influence and status. It will also prove to be beneficial to the members of the Majles as well since they would be able to take credit for ratifying any treaties that precipitate out of Iran joining the SCO.

### C. DISINCENTIVES

Just as the previous efforts to entice Iran into giving up its nuclear program were not strong enough, the previous efforts to coerce Iran into giving up its nuclear program were not strong enough either. As a result, the disincentives, aka punishments or costs, need to be substantially stronger. In his book, *Negotiating with Iran*, former Iranian hostage and Obama administration point-man for Iran at the State Department, John Limbert, writes that, "Iran does not respond to pressure. Iran only responds to a lot of pressure."<sup>281</sup> As such, the additional measures need to not only be stronger, but need to target the key decision-makers and groups involved with the nuclear program: the Supreme Leader, the President, the AEOI, the IRGC, the SNSC, and the Majles. These individuals and groups all rely on the Iranian economy to provide the monetary funds necessary for the nuclear program. Therefore, a significant portion of the new proposed sanctions will focus on some aspect of the Iranian economy. These measures are designed to target specifically those who rely on traditional government revenue for their funding, such as Ahmadinejad, the IRGC to some degree, and the AEOI, as well as the Majles. Khamenei will be affected as well, but additional measures that target his extra-

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<sup>280</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Iran: US Concerns and Policy Responses*, by Kenneth Katzman, CRS Report RL32048 (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional Information and Publishing, September 22, 2010), 42.

<sup>281</sup> John Limbert, *Negotiating with Iran*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2009), quoted in Alex Fattal, "Prisoner's Dilemma," *Foreign Policy*, October 14, 2011, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/14/prisoners\\_dilemma?page=full](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/14/prisoners_dilemma?page=full), accessed October 14, 2011.



governmental funds will be needed to affect him personally. The rest of the proposed measures will focus on other, non-economic methods of bringing even greater pressure to bear upon those decision-makers.

## **1. Economic Disincentives**

Iran's economy is most vulnerable in two areas: the oil and gas industry, and the centrality of the Central Bank of Iran (aka Bank Markazi). Iran is vulnerable in the oil and gas industry because 85% of its revenue is generated through the oil sector.<sup>282</sup> Iran is vulnerable with regards to the Central Bank of Iran because it is the main pillar for the Iranian economic system since it alone issues currency and oversees all the banks—both state and privately owned.<sup>283</sup> As such, two of the most powerful tools to use against Iran are to sanction Iran's oil and gas exports and any country that buys them, and to sanction the Central Bank of Iran.

Preventing Iran from selling oil and gas is a contentious idea. Some say that if we prevent Iran from exporting oil, that it would serve to push the price of oil per barrel to economically damaging levels.<sup>284</sup> Proponents of this viewpoint also argue that if we prevent Iran from importing gasoline, that Iran might respond by halting its oil exports, and create the same problem.<sup>285</sup> As a result, they argue, sanctioning Iran's oil and gas exports and imports should be used as a last resort.<sup>286</sup> However, Saudi Arabian Prince Turki al-Faisal has stated that Saudi Arabia has enough spare production capacity to instantly make-up for any decrease in Iranian output—whether it results from sanctions

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<sup>282</sup> Department of State, "Iran," October 21, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5314.htm>.

<sup>283</sup> The Economist, "Iran: Financial Services Forecast," August 18, 2008, [http://www.eiu.com/index.asp?layout=ib3Article&article\\_id=1603717345&country\\_id=1120000312&pubtypeid=1132462498&industry\\_id=&category\\_id=775133077&rf=0](http://www.eiu.com/index.asp?layout=ib3Article&article_id=1603717345&country_id=1120000312&pubtypeid=1132462498&industry_id=&category_id=775133077&rf=0).

<sup>284</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 44.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

or something else.<sup>287</sup> Since the Iranian economy is almost entirely dependent on oil exports, and since Saudi Arabia has the capacity to cover any decrease in Iranian exports of oil, then in order to truly affect the regime's decision-making calculus the United States should work within the UN Security Council to sanction Iran's export of oil. In addition, the U.S. should consider working within the Security Council to emplace sanctions on Iran's import of gasoline. There are costs and benefits to this recommendation, however. If the international community emplaces and enforces sanctions on Iran importing gasoline, then Iran will almost assuredly begin claiming that women and children are dying as a result in order to erode international support for the sanctions.<sup>288</sup> On the benefits side though, preventing Iran from importing gasoline would also strike a blow against another antagonist of the U.S., Venezuela, who has been providing gasoline to Iran for several years.<sup>289</sup>

The other main economic pillar the U.S. should strike is the Central Bank of Iran. The U.S. should consider garnering international support in the UN Security Council to sanction the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and by doing so, close off the international financial community to Iran by preventing any international financial transaction with the Central Bank of Iran.<sup>290</sup> This would effectively cripple Iran's economy and make it much more expensive for companies to trade with Iran.<sup>291</sup> As with most policy options however, there is some risk. By preventing Iran from being able to conduct international financial transactions, Iran would have to find irregular methods of obtaining payment for

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<sup>287</sup> Jay Solomon, "Saudi Suggests Squeezing Iran Over Nuclear Ambitions," *Wall Street Journal*, June 22, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304887904576400083811644642.html>, accessed September 15, 2011.

<sup>288</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 44.

<sup>289</sup> Marek Strzelecki, "Venezuela to Resume Gasoline Shipments to Iran, EIG Reports," Bloomberg, January 25, 2011, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-01-25/venezuela-to-resume-gasoline-shipments-to-iran-eig-reports.html>, accessed November 1, 2011.

<sup>290</sup> Golnaz Esfandiari, "Top U.S. Treasury Official in Europe For talks on Sanctioning Iranian Central Bank," Radio Free Europe, October 25, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/top\\_us\\_treasury\\_official\\_in\\_europe\\_to\\_push\\_for\\_iranian\\_central\\_bank\\_sanctions/24370821.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/top_us_treasury_official_in_europe_to_push_for_iranian_central_bank_sanctions/24370821.html), accessed November 1, 2011.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

its oil.<sup>292</sup> This would take time for Iran and during that time, unless the sanctions were coordinated with Saudi Arabia, the world may face a decreased amount of oil available for purchase, thus resulting in a sharp increase in the price of oil.<sup>293</sup> The benefit though, would be that Iran suffers a major decrease in revenue as a result of not being able to sell its oil on the open market.

The reason that decreasing Iran's revenue will be so powerful is because Iran, through Ahmadinejad's populist programs, is providing payments to the Iranian populace to the tune of \$3 billion a month, or \$36 billion a year, in order to offset the rise in prices of oil, gas, electricity, bread, etc. due to the end of Iran's subsidizing program.<sup>294</sup> Iran's oil and gas revenue is currently estimated for the 2011–2012 year to amount to approximately \$103 billion.<sup>295</sup> The subsidies then comprise approximately 35% of that revenue. Furthermore, since 85% of Iran's revenue comes from oil and gas, then that means Iran's estimated revenue for the 2011-2012 timeframe is approximately \$121 billion, of which the payouts to the populace comprise 30%. So sanctioning Iran's oil and gas industry would have a crippling effect on the Iranian economy because Ahmadinejad, with the Majles' and Supreme Leader's approval, has the Iranian government paying out 30% of its earnings to the people in order to offset the rise in prices due to the end of the subsidy programs. By restricting the amount of revenue Iran would bring in, it may further heighten the tension between Khamenei and Ahmadinejad as the resource scarcity leads to competition over where the limited funds should be spent. In addition, it will force Ahmadinejad, the Majles, and Khamenei to choose which programs get funded and which do not, which may result in either the nuclear weapons program being shut down, or the populace no longer receiving funds to offset the increase

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Golnaz Esfandiari, "Top U.S. Treasury Official in Europe For talks on Sanctioning Iranian Central Bank," Radio Free Europe, October 25, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/top\\_us\\_treasury\\_official\\_in\\_europe\\_to\\_push\\_for\\_iranian\\_central\\_bank\\_sanctions/24370821.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/top_us_treasury_official_in_europe_to_push_for_iranian_central_bank_sanctions/24370821.html), accessed November 1, 2011.

<sup>294</sup> Patrick Clawson, "Iran Makes Itself More Vulnerable to Outside Pressure," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, August 4, 2011, <http://washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=3391>, accessed August 8, 2011.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

in prices. This in turn may result in an economic recession or depression as consumer spending greatly decreases and unemployment increases. Thus by plunging the Iranian economy into such dire straits, it may help set the conditions for a popular uprising, which is discussed in the next section.

Both recommendations for stronger sanctions are focused on the two pillars of the Iranian economy—oil exports and the Central Bank of Iran. By preventing Iran from legally exporting its oil, or by preventing Iran from legally selling its oil (or selling anything internationally), these recommendations are targeting Iran’s ability to generate revenue. As Iran’s revenue falls, so too does its ability to provide for its people and thus these recommendations target Iran’s leaders—Khamenei and Ahmadinejad, who controls the economic policy for the country, as well as the Majles—and could work hand-in-hand with the next set of recommendations that are focused primarily against Khamenei, Ahmadinejad, the IRGC, the Supreme National Security Council, and the Majles.

## **2. Regime Change**

The one thing that an autocratic leader fears most is a violent coup. Khamenei is no stranger to this fear, having participated in the overthrow of the Shah and thus seeing firsthand the destruction that can result. In fact, the one time that Khamenei seemed truly open to negotiations with the U.S. over that status of the Iranian nuclear program and Iran’s support for terrorists, was in 2003 when the U.S. had already invaded Iraq and achieved in a matter of weeks what the Iranians were not able to accomplish in eight years: destroy Saddam’s army and overthrow his government. Only after that, when the military might of the U.S. was arrayed on two of Iran’s borders (Iraq and Afghanistan), did Khamenei seem willing to negotiate. As a result, the only way to bring significant amounts of pressure to bear on Khamenei—and thus the IRGC and other hardliners—is to threaten regime change. The most effective approach to threaten the regime should involve the minority groups and ethnic groups staging a coordinated insurgency or uncoordinated insurgencies.<sup>296</sup> It would also utilize the urban youth as the nucleus of a

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<sup>296</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 157.

popular uprising. The main goal would be to simply apply additional points of pressure on the regime, specifically Khamenei, in order to bring him to the negotiating table.<sup>297</sup> If the regime should be overthrown however, that would at least lead to a delay in Iran's obtainment of nuclear weapons during which time the U.S. could attempt to establish a friendly relationship with the new government and provide many more incentives to prevent it from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Iran is a heterogeneous nation with numerous ethnic groups that are less well-off than the dominant Persians, and therefore opportunities for stirring up resentment amongst those groups abounds. The Persians comprise 61% of the population in Iran, followed by the Azeris at 16%, then the Kurds with 10%, the Lurs with 6%, and the Balochs, Arabs, and Turkomen with 2% each and 1% for other minorities.<sup>298</sup> Khamenei is an Azeri and thus, the Azeris are not likely to be as prone to resorting to an insurgency in order to affect political change. However, the Kurds, the Balochs, Arabs and the Turkomen have a history of fighting against the regime and remain displeased with their current status.<sup>299</sup> These groups, some of whom have elements that are fighting against the regime currently, such as the Balochi Sunni-insurgency group Jundallah, would all be likely candidates for covert U.S. assistance.<sup>300</sup> In order to make these groups more effective, they need to focus on targeting those instruments of the state that are either located in Persian areas (such as the nuclear facilities), or are dominated by Persians. Doing so will ensure that when the state responds with overly-repressive measures then those measures will help to crystallize the ethnic group's identity and will elevate awareness of the group's issues, both of which will serve to increase support for the

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<sup>297</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 158.

<sup>298</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook: Iran," November 2, 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>.

<sup>299</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, et. al., *Which Path to Persia?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 157.

<sup>300</sup> Scott Peterson, "Iran, still haunted by Jundallah attacks, blames West," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 15, 2010, [http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2010/1215/Iran-still-haunted-by-Jundallah-attacks-blames-West/\(page\)/2](http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2010/1215/Iran-still-haunted-by-Jundallah-attacks-blames-West/(page)/2), accessed November 2, 2011.

group.<sup>301</sup> In addition, by attacking the Persian areas and Persian-dominated groups, the ensuing government response will serve to paint the conflict between ethnic groups, thus further crystallizing the ethnic group's identity because it will help the ethnic group recognize that they now have a common enemy: the Persians.<sup>302</sup>

The urban youth are the other main demographic that should be mobilized. In 2003, 59% of Iran's population was under the age of 24, with that figure climbing to over 60% in 2011.<sup>303</sup> In 2011, the median age in Iran was estimated to be approximately 26.8 years old.<sup>304</sup> In 2005, 60% of women between 18–30 years of age in an urban area had a university degree, while the number for men was 50%.<sup>305</sup> Iran currently has approximately 11.1% unemployment rate, yet despite the well-educated background of most Iranian young adults (age 15–29), they account for approximately 70% of the unemployed.<sup>306</sup> In addition, because they are not able to obtain jobs, they are not able to support themselves and thus cannot get married.<sup>307</sup> As a result, this demographic is somewhat excluded from the rest of Iranian society. Additionally, Iranian internet users make up over 50% of all internet users in the Middle East, and the Iranian youth are

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<sup>301</sup> Daniel Byman, "The Logic of Ethnic Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 21 (1998): 155.

<sup>302</sup> Daniel Byman, "The Logic of Ethnic Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 21 (1998): 154.

<sup>303</sup> Graham E. Fuller, "The Youth Factor: The New Demographics of the Middle East and the Implications for US Policy," The Brookings Institution, June 3, 2003, [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/06middleeast\\_fuller/fuller20030601.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/06middleeast_fuller/fuller20030601.pdf), accessed August 12, 2011.

<sup>304</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook: Iran," November 2, 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>.

<sup>305</sup> Djavad Salehi-Ishfahani and Daniel Egel, "Youth Exclusion in Iran: The State of Education, Employment, and Family Formation," The Brookings Institution, September 2007, p. 18, [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/09\\_youth\\_exclusion\\_salehi\\_isfahani.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/09_youth_exclusion_salehi_isfahani.aspx), accessed August 12, 2011.

<sup>306</sup> Djavad Salehi-Ishfahani, "Iran's Youth, the Unintended Victims of Sanctions," Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, August 2010, [http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/Salehi-Isfahani\\_DI-Policy-Brief\\_Iran-Youth.pdf](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/Salehi-Isfahani_DI-Policy-Brief_Iran-Youth.pdf), accessed November 2, 2011.

<sup>307</sup> Djavad Salehi-Ishfahani and Daniel Egel, "Youth Exclusion in Iran: The State of Education, Employment, and Family Formation," The Brookings Institution, September 2007, p. 33, [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/09\\_youth\\_exclusion\\_salehi\\_isfahani.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/09_youth_exclusion_salehi_isfahani.aspx), accessed August 12, 2011.

thought to be the largest body of internet users in Iran in which 46% use the internet.<sup>308</sup> Given that the U.S. has no embassy in Iran and military information broadcast systems have limited range, then the best way to reach this population group that feels excluded, is largely unemployed, and largely single is the internet. Thus the internet should be used to mobilize the youth, particularly in the urban areas, to begin pressing for change. Additionally, the incentives for Iran to give up its nuclear weapons program should be broadcast through the internet in order to generate grassroots support amongst the internet users—specifically the youth, but also the upper and middle-class and the educated—for Iran to give up its nuclear weapons program and accept the positive inducements offered to it.

When these recommendations of courses of action to threaten regime change and thus influence Khamenei's and the IRGC's decision-making calculus are taken in conjunction with the recommended additional sanctions, the effects of both will be amplified. The regime will need to spend more money to fund operations to suppress the insurgency, while simultaneously the regime will be receiving less money in revenues. It will have to make a difficult decision as to whether to continue to spend large sums of money on the nuclear weapons program (and other military programs), and risk an increasingly disaffected population and therefore possible revolt, or to stop spending money on the nuclear program and provide for the people in order to ensure regime survival. Therefore, these measures target those with vested interest in regime survival, most notably Khamenei, as well as the IRGC, Ahmadinejad, the Supreme National Security Council, the Majles, and even the AEOL.

### **3. Non-Economic Methods**

The last element to bring pressure against Iran and affect Khamenei's decision-making involves Syria, Hezbollah, and Dubai. Iran's only ally in the Middle East is Syria. Though the alliance is not necessarily one of shared culture or values, it is still a strong relationship that is based on mutual enemies, mutual friends (such as Hezbollah

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<sup>308</sup> "Iran," Internet World Stats, June 30, 2011, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/middle.htm#ir>, accessed November 7, 2011.

and Hamas), and economic, military, and nuclear cooperation.<sup>309</sup> The Syrian facility, al-Kibar, at Deir al-Zour, destroyed by an Israeli strike in 2007, was assessed by the IAEA in 2011 as being a covert nuclear reactor built with assistance from North Korea and likely Iran.<sup>310</sup> In addition, Iran also uses Syria as a way-point for transporting weapons to Hezbollah and Hamas.<sup>311</sup> In fact, after a meeting in June 2011 between the Syrian Deputy Vice President for Security Affairs Muhammed Nasif Kheirbek and the Quds Force Commander Qassem Suleimani, Iran agreed to provide \$23 million to Syria in order to build a base in Latakia, Syria to better facilitate arms shipments coming from Iran and being meted out to Hezbollah, Hamas, and of course, Syria to help with their domestic unrest.<sup>312</sup> While the economic cooperation between the two is not substantial, it may grow that way as Iran becomes more and more isolated.

As a result of the cooperation between the two, it might be wise to incorporate the tactic of supporting the Syrian opposition against Syria's current regime in order to continue to weaken Syria, keep it facing inwards, and by doing so further weaken Iran by causing Syria to potentially ask Iran for more money and equipment. If this step was taken in conjunction with the economic disincentives and regime change recommendations already provided, it would further serve to weaken Iran financially, or if Iran is not able to provide more money or resources to Syria, then it would weaken Iran strategically. In addition, if the opposition were to win in Syria, then it is possible that Iran's land-bridge to Hezbollah and Hamas—via Shia-Iraq and friendly Syria—would be destroyed, thus not only weakening Hezbollah and Hamas, but in the process of weakening those two proxies of Iranian influence abroad, also weaken Iran further.

The final way to apply pressure to Khamenei and the IRGC especially is by convincing the United Arab Emirates to apply and enforce stronger regulations to Dubai regarding trade with Iran. Dubai is known as "Iran's offshore business center" with

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<sup>309</sup> Will Fulton, Robert Frasco, and Ariel Farrar-Wellman, "Syria-Iran Foreign Relations," IranTracker. Org, August 15, 2011, <http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/syria-iran-foreign-relations>, accessed October 18, 2011.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.



nearly 400,000 Iranians living in Dubai and comprising 17% of Dubai's population.<sup>313</sup> In addition, Dubai has over 8,000 Iranian business and 1,200 Iranian trading companies that operate within its borders.<sup>314</sup> This enormous Iranian ex-patriot populace provides an easy avenue for the IRGC (Iran's state-sponsored smugglers), to gain access to Western markets in order to procure technologies and products that, due to sanctions, Western companies are currently prohibited from selling to Iran. In 2009, trade between Iran and Dubai amounted to approximately \$12 billion, and consisted of both legitimate trade such as pistachios, carpets, household appliances, and petrochemicals, and illegitimate trade such as field-programmable gate arrays, field communicators, integrated circuits, microcontrollers, and Global Positioning Systems (GPS).<sup>315</sup> If this "offshore business center" were denied to Iran, they would likely shift to other free-trade zones scattered throughout the world, but none that would provide as easy access as Dubai. As a result, denying Dubai to Iranian business, and particularly the IRGC, would substantially impact the IRGC's ability to procure illicit and banned goods, as well as slow down the Iranian economy. In addition, it would take many years for Iran to bring the level of trade in the new area up to the level it was at with Dubai, and during that time, Iran would lose both valuable revenue, and valuable western products. This would cause difficulty not only for the IRGC and its military hardware and its military research and development projects, but also for the average Iranian citizen. As such, it would apply additional pressure to the IRGC (and likely result in hardening their determination to gain access to those products they are not allowed to have), additional pressure on the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran as their supply of products is severed, potentially make life more difficult for the average Iranian, and by doing all the above, put additional pressure on Khamenei.

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<sup>313</sup> Kambriz Foroohar, "Dubai Helps Iran Evade Sanctions As Smugglers Ignore US Laws," *Bloomberg*, January 25, 2010, [http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=av5smtYe\\_DDA](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=av5smtYe_DDA), accessed April 28, 2011.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> David Albright, Paul Brannan, and Andrea Scheel, "Iranian Entities Illicit Procurement Network," *Institute for Science and International Security*, January 12, 2009, p3, from <http://www.isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/IranMilitaryProcurement.pdf>, accessed May 4, 2011.

And so, the final problem to deal with is how to gain Russia and China's support for recommended stronger sanctions against Iran. Fortunately, recent events in the fall of 2011 have made this more politically feasible as Iran has been caught red-handed funding a Quds Force plot to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador in Washington, DC.<sup>316</sup> In addition, the IAEA issued a report on November 8, 2011 to the UN Security Council in which it says, "Iran is suspected of conducting secret experiments whose sole purpose can only be the development of nuclear arms."<sup>317</sup> As such, the political environment that Iran operates in has started to change and as a result, it may be easier to convince Russia and China to agree to the recommendations proposed.

#### **D. HOW TO BRING RUSSIA ON BOARD**

Russia supports Iran because it is in its interests to do so. Iran is Russia's main trading partner in the Middle East with 2009 bilateral trade amounting to approximately \$3 billion.<sup>318</sup> This trade is driven by Russia's desire to establish trade and transportation links to the Persian Gulf, to coordinate gas and oil export policies (since the two countries have the largest gas deposits in the world), and to counter Western, and more specifically U.S., influence in the Middle East.<sup>319</sup> Yet Russian policies are realist-based and thus the way to garner additional Russian support for the recommended measures hinge on showing Russia it is more beneficial for Russia to cooperate with the U.S. than with Iran. The U.S. might accomplish this by encouraging Russia's growing ties with Israel, and leverage Russo-Iranian energy competition.<sup>320</sup> Russia has recently purchased sophisticated Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) from Israel, ostensibly for Russia to

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<sup>316</sup> "US Ties Iran to Assassination Plot Against Saudi Diplomat on U.S. Soil," FoxNews.com, October 11, 2011, <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2011/10/11/iranians-charged-over-terror-plot-in-us/#ixzz1aVVISghe>, accessed October 11, 2011.

<sup>317</sup> "Iran Conducting Experiments 'Specific' to Developing Nuclear Arms, U.N. Says," FoxNews.com, November 8, 2011, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2011/11/08/iran-conducting-experiments-specific-to-developing-nuclear-arms-un-says/#ixzz1d9HZ8An0>, accessed November 8, 2011.

<sup>318</sup> D. Brandon Fite, "U.S. and Iranian Strategic Competition: Competition Involving Russia and China," Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 11, 2011, p. 28, [http://csis.org/files/publication/110811\\_Iran\\_Chapter\\_X.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/110811_Iran_Chapter_X.pdf), accessed August 18, 2011.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

help patrol the thousands of miles of pipeline Russia has.<sup>321</sup> If the U.S. and Israel can encourage Russia to purchase more from Israel, then Russia may reduce its level of support for Iran so that it does not alienate the increasingly important trading partner Israel.<sup>322</sup> In addition, both Russia and Iran compete to provide energy and especially natural gas to Europe, as well as to control the energy resources in the Caspian Sea region.<sup>323</sup> The U.S. should convince its European allies to offer Russia more favorable deals on purchasing energy from Russia in exchange for Russia abandoning support for Iran.<sup>324</sup> Using both Israel and Europe in these manners should begin eroding Russia's support for Iran and gaining Russia's support for stronger sanctions.

#### **E. HOW TO BRING CHINA ON BOARD**

China is the other major actor whose support in the UN Security Council Iran enjoys. Like Russia, China's leaders are realists and are more concerned about China's security and prosperity than they are about a nuclear-armed Iran.<sup>325</sup> China's main interest in Iran is as an energy provider, and their secondary interests are as an arms market and as a foothold in the Middle East.<sup>326</sup> As such, the way to begin moving China away from Iran involves finding China alternative supplies for energy.<sup>327</sup> The U.S. has many oil partners, and for those in the Middle East, it is in their strategic national interest to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power. As such, the U.S. and its Middle Eastern allies should work together to provide better oil deals to China in order to wean China off of Iranian oil.<sup>328</sup> In addition, the U.S. should work to find other economic incentives to persuade China that it is in China's interests to cooperate with the

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> D. Brandon Fite, "U.S. and Iranian Strategic Competition: Competition Involving Russia and China," Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 11, 2011, p. 34, [http://csis.org/files/publication/110811\\_Iran\\_Chapter\\_X.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/110811_Iran_Chapter_X.pdf), accessed August 18, 2011.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

U.S. and the West instead of with Iran. Such incentives could include trilateral negotiations with Iraq on investments in Iraqi oil fields or Afghanistan mineral deposits, joint Sino-U.S. energy ventures such as research and development in alternatives to oil, or Sino-Russian trade or energy agreements sponsored by the U.S. Regardless, convincing Russia and China that it is in their best interests to cooperate with the West and the U.S. instead of Iran should focus on economic inducements since the U.S. and the West have much greater resources and markets to offer.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

This study began with an idea that the current U.S. strategy being used against Iran was founded upon an inaccurate understanding of who the true decision-makers were in Iran with regards to the Iranian nuclear weapons program. An in-depth study of the history of the Iranian nuclear weapons program was undertaken in order to identify those true decision-makers. The hypothesis was that once those decision-makers were identified, the correct deterrence lens could be applied to develop a more effective strategy. Instead what was found was that there was no one particular lens and that Iran was best viewed through the three lenses of Rational Actor model, Organizational Behavior model, and Government Politics model. Thus any strategy that used only one lens was bound to fail. As a result, a new strategy focused more on coercive diplomacy was created using those three lenses that focused on the rationality of each individual decision-maker as well as the rationality of the groups involved and the politics of the groups involved. The economic inducements of offering membership into the World Trade Organization, resumption of pre-sanctions trade with Japan and Europe, lifting of both international and unilateral sanctions, allowing Iran to obtain funds from international financial institutions such as the World Bank and providing measures to encourage foreign investment in Iran are tailored to gain support from not only the pragmatists, but also the hardliners to show them that it is better to give up the nuclear weapons program than to continue it. As such, these measures focus predominantly on the Majles, Ahmadinejad, and the IRGC. In order to help their decision-making calculus, especially that of Khamenei, the Supreme National Security Council and the IRGC, the

disincentives proposed included sanctioning Iran's oil and gas exports and the Central Bank of Iran, as well as covertly threatening regime change by using minority and ethnic groups and the massive number of unemployed youth to bring riots, protests, insurgencies and possible revolt to Khamenei's doorstep, and therefore the doorsteps of the Supreme National Security Council and the IRGC. The remaining tactics to use to bring further pressure on Iran involves attacking their alliances with Syria and Hezbollah, and attacking their ability to access western markets through Dubai. The combination of the sanctions that would limit Iran's incoming revenue, the civil unrest and insurgencies which would cause Iran to spend more money and resources quelling the unrest, and further restricting Iran's ability to access foreign markets via Dubai, would result in Khamenei and Ahmadinejad being forced to make difficult decisions as to what government programs they should fund with the ever-decreasing supply of funds. It would also cause competition over scarce resources as the IRGC and the AEOI would likely resort to internal politics in order for each to procure funding over the other. When the final measures are taken to wean China away from dependence on Iranian oil and to encourage Russia to conduct more trade with the West are taken, Iran's two greatest supporters internationally will begin to withdraw their support. All of the above measures, taken quickly within the current international environment that Iran has brought upon itself, would likely ensure Khamenei, Ahmadinejad, the IRGC, the AEOI, the SNSC, and the Majles would all agree to save their own skin by canceling the nuclear weapons program and begin cooperating with the United Nations and the U.S.

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